MARVEL COMICS
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2099
UNLIMITED
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Can DOOM save the Fantastic Four?
DIRECT EDITION
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MIRRORS

"...Human understanding is like a false mirror, which... distorts and discolors the nature of things by mingling its own nature with it."

—Francis Bacon

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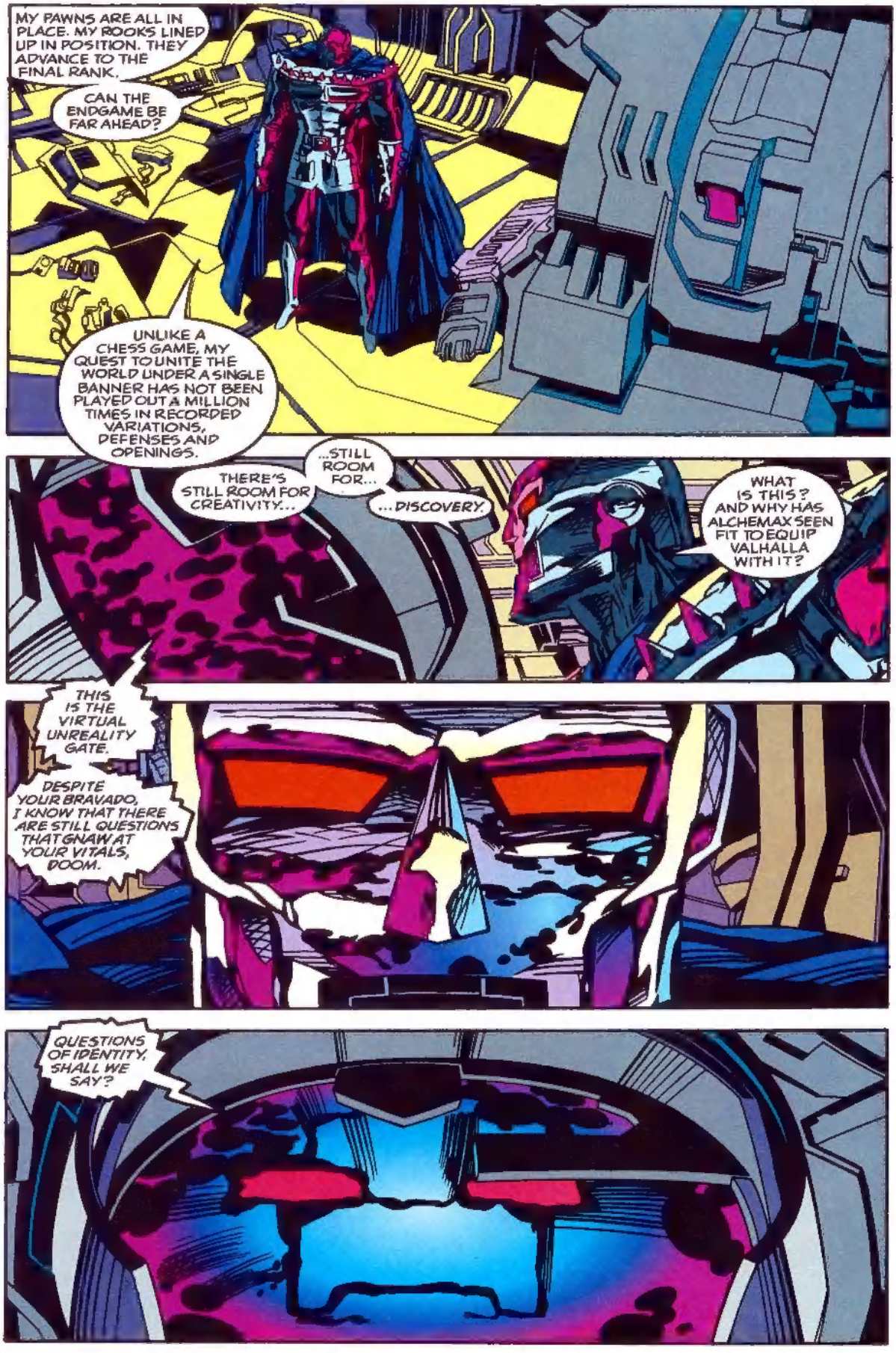
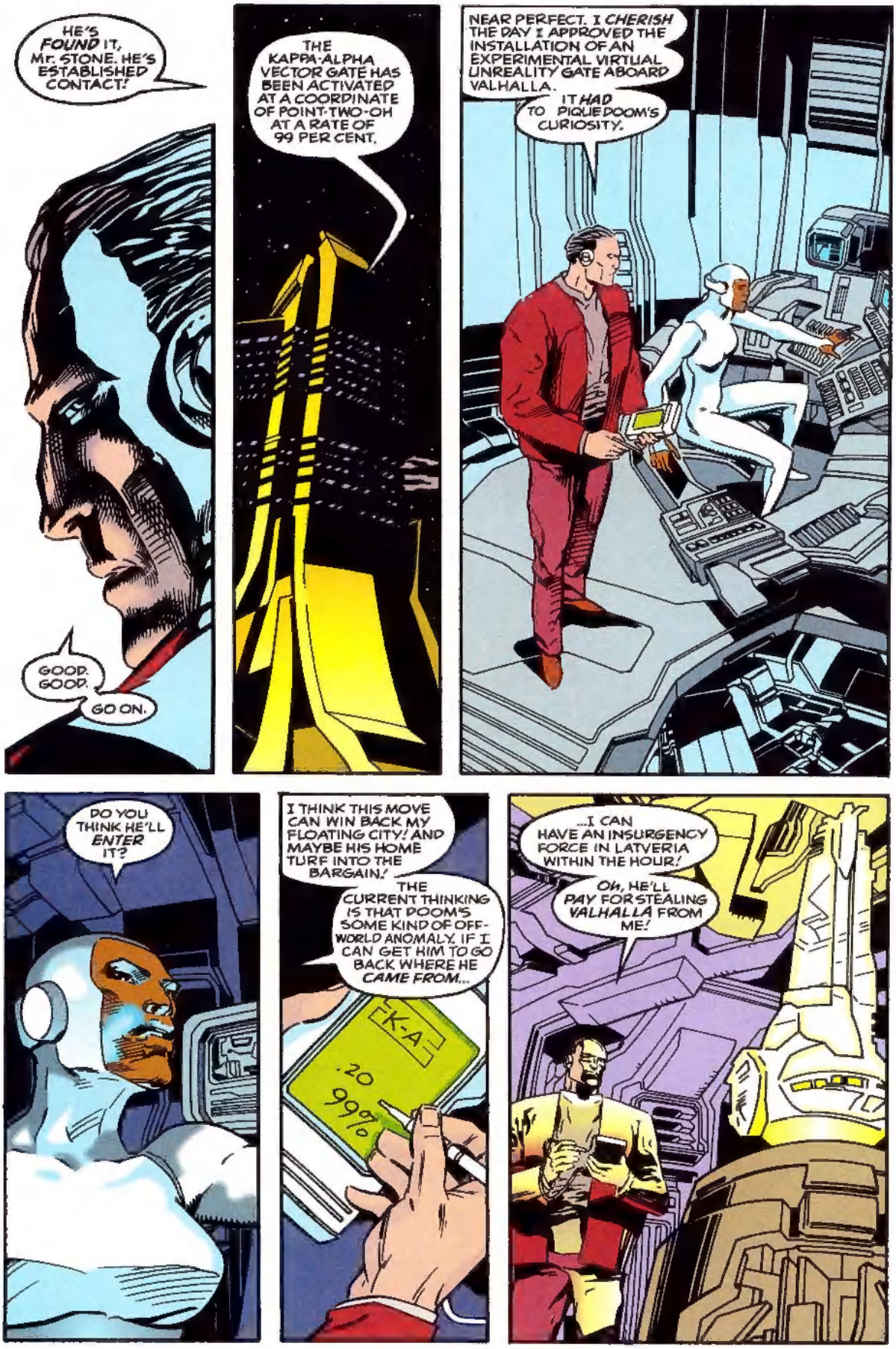
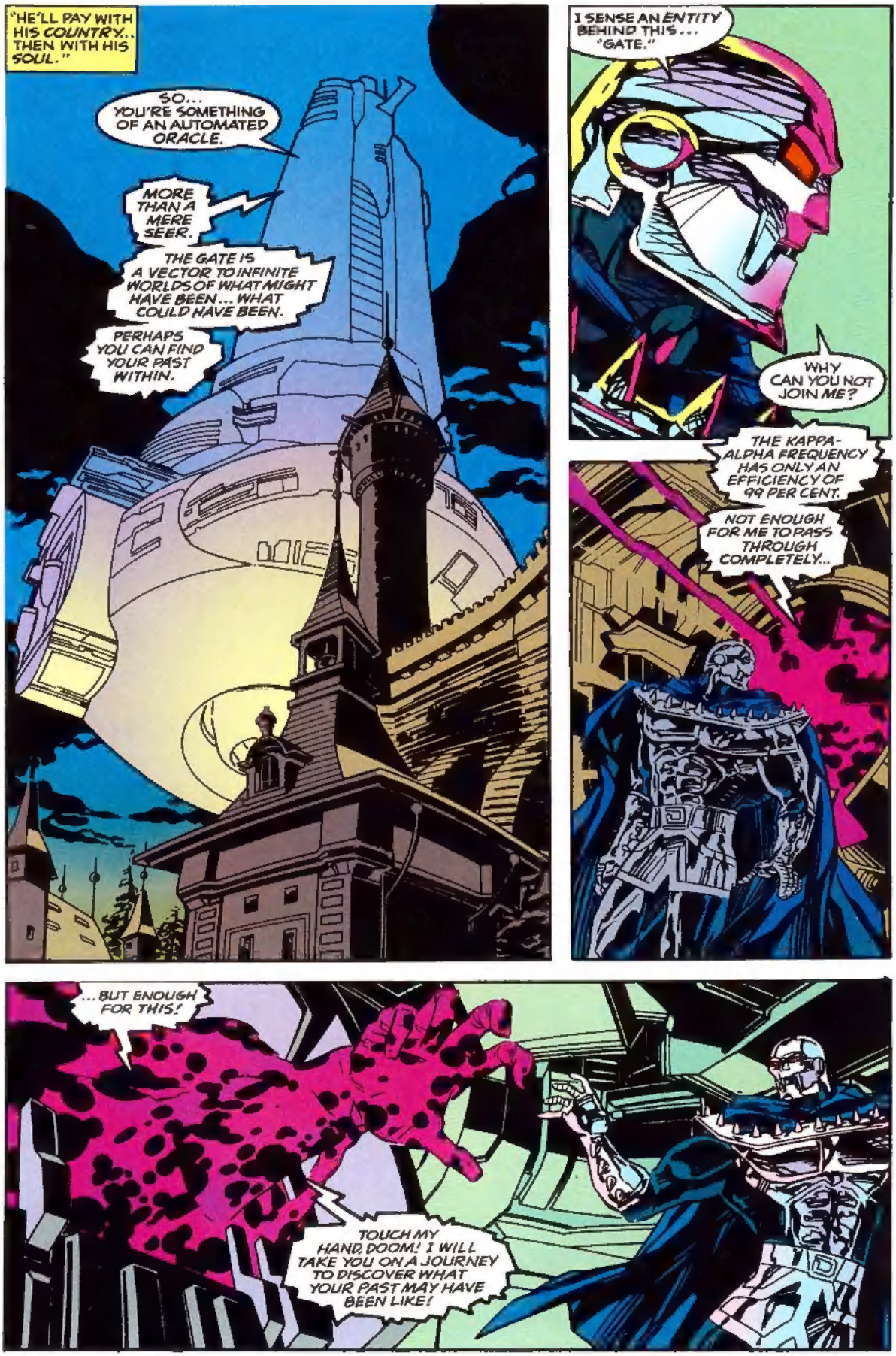
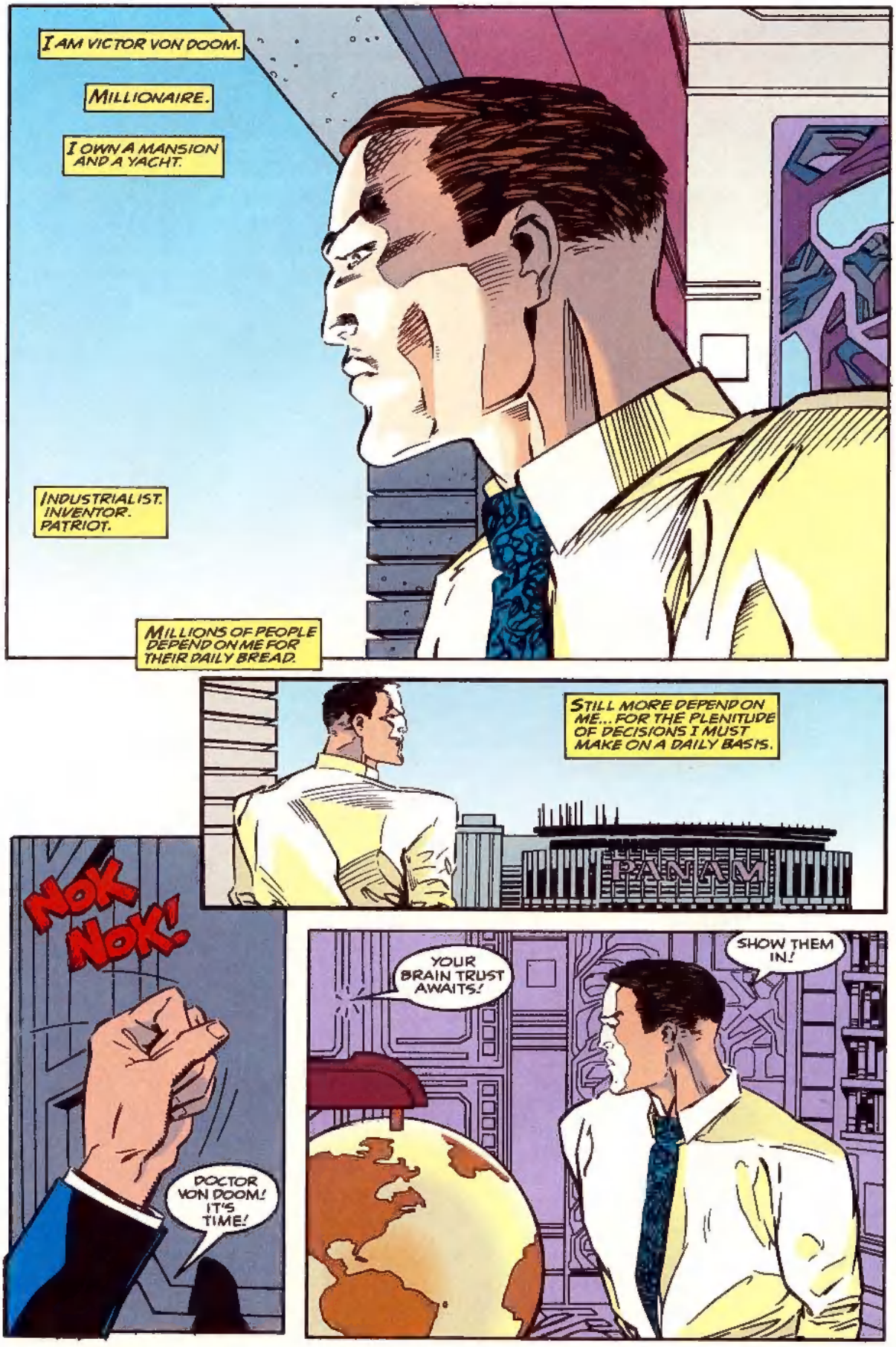

MY PAWNS ARE ALL IN PLACE. MY ROOKS LINED UP IN POSITION. THEY ADVANCE TO THE FINAL RANK.
CAN THE ENDGAME BE FAR AHEAD?
UNLIKE A CHESS GAME, MY QUEST TO UNITE THE WORLD UNDER A SINGLE BANNER HAS NOT BEEN PLAYED OUT A MILLION TIMES IN RECORDED VARIATIONS, DEFENSES AND OPENINGS.
THERE'S STILL ROOM FOR CREATIVITY...
...STILL ROOM FOR...
...DISCOVERY.
WHAT IS THIS? AND WHY HAS ALCHEMAX SEEN FIT TO EQUIP VALHALLA WITH IT?
THIS IS THE VIRTUAL UNREALITY GATE.
DESPITE YOUR BRAVADO, I KNOW THAT THERE ARE STILL QUESTIONS THAT GNAW AT YOUR VITALS, DOOM.
QUESTIONS OF IDENTITY, SHALL WE SAY?

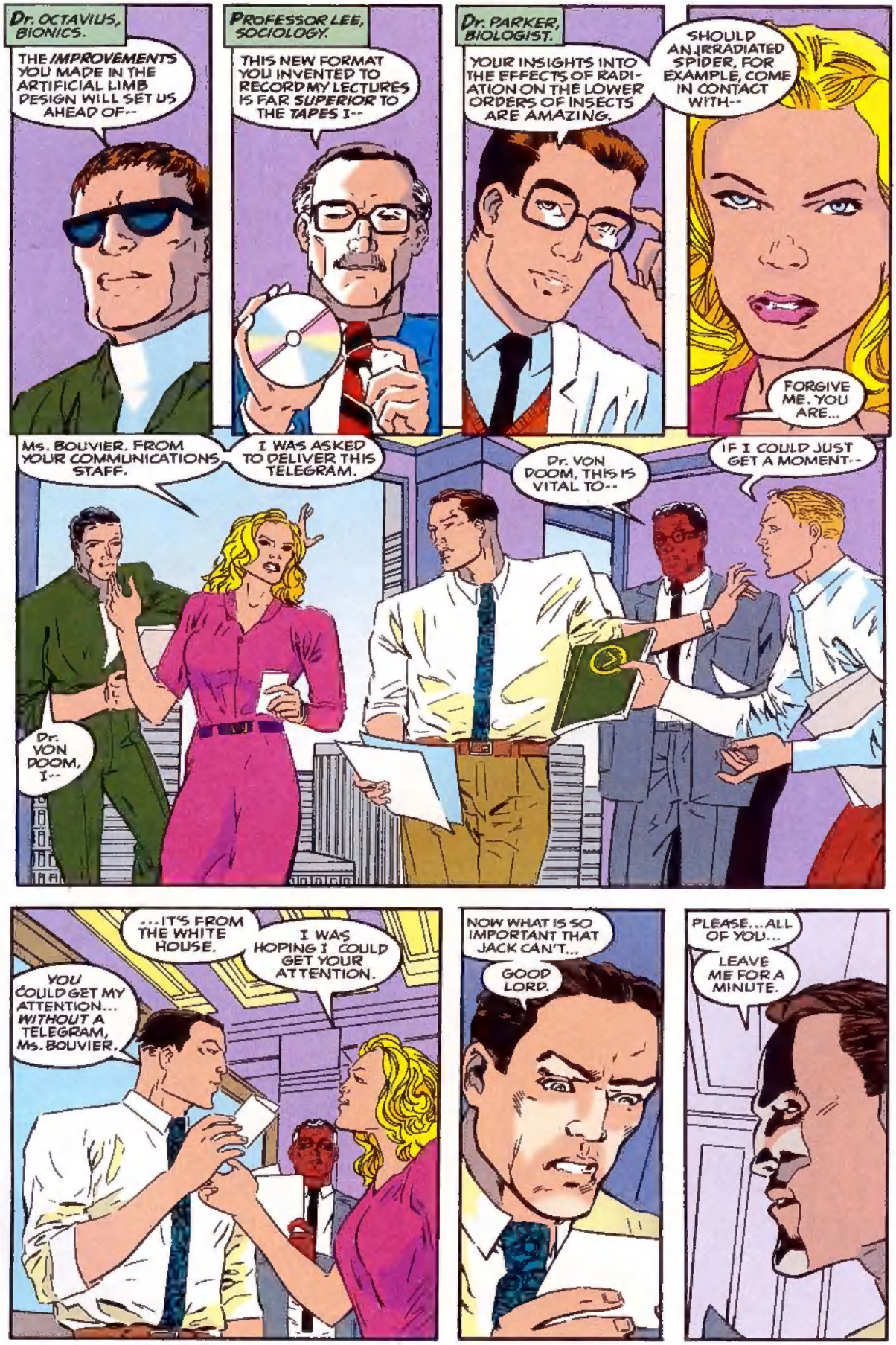

HE'S FOUND IT, Mr. STONE. HE'S ESTABLISHED CONTACT!
GOOD. GOOD.
GO ON.
THE KAPPA-ALPHA VECTOR GATE HAS BEEN ACTIVATED AT A COORDINATE OF POINT-TWO-OH AT A RATE OF 99 PER CENT.
NEAR PERFECT. I CHERISH THE DAY I APPROVED THE INSTALLATION OF AN EXPERIMENTAL VIRTUAL UNREALITY GATE ABOARD VALHALLA.
IT HAD TO PIQUE DOOM'S CURIOSITY.
DO YOU THINK HE'LL ENTER IT?
I THINK THIS MOVE CAN WIN BACK MY FLOATING CITY! AND MAYBE HIS HOME TURF INTO THE BARGAIN!
THE CURRENT THINKING IS THAT DOOM'S SOME KIND OF OFF-WORLD ANOMALY. IF I CAN GET HIM TO GO BACK WHERE HE CAME FROM...
K-A
.20
99%
...I CAN HAVE AN INSURGENCY FORCE IN LATVERIA WITHIN THE HOUR!
OH, HE'LL PAY FOR STEALING VALHALLA FROM ME!

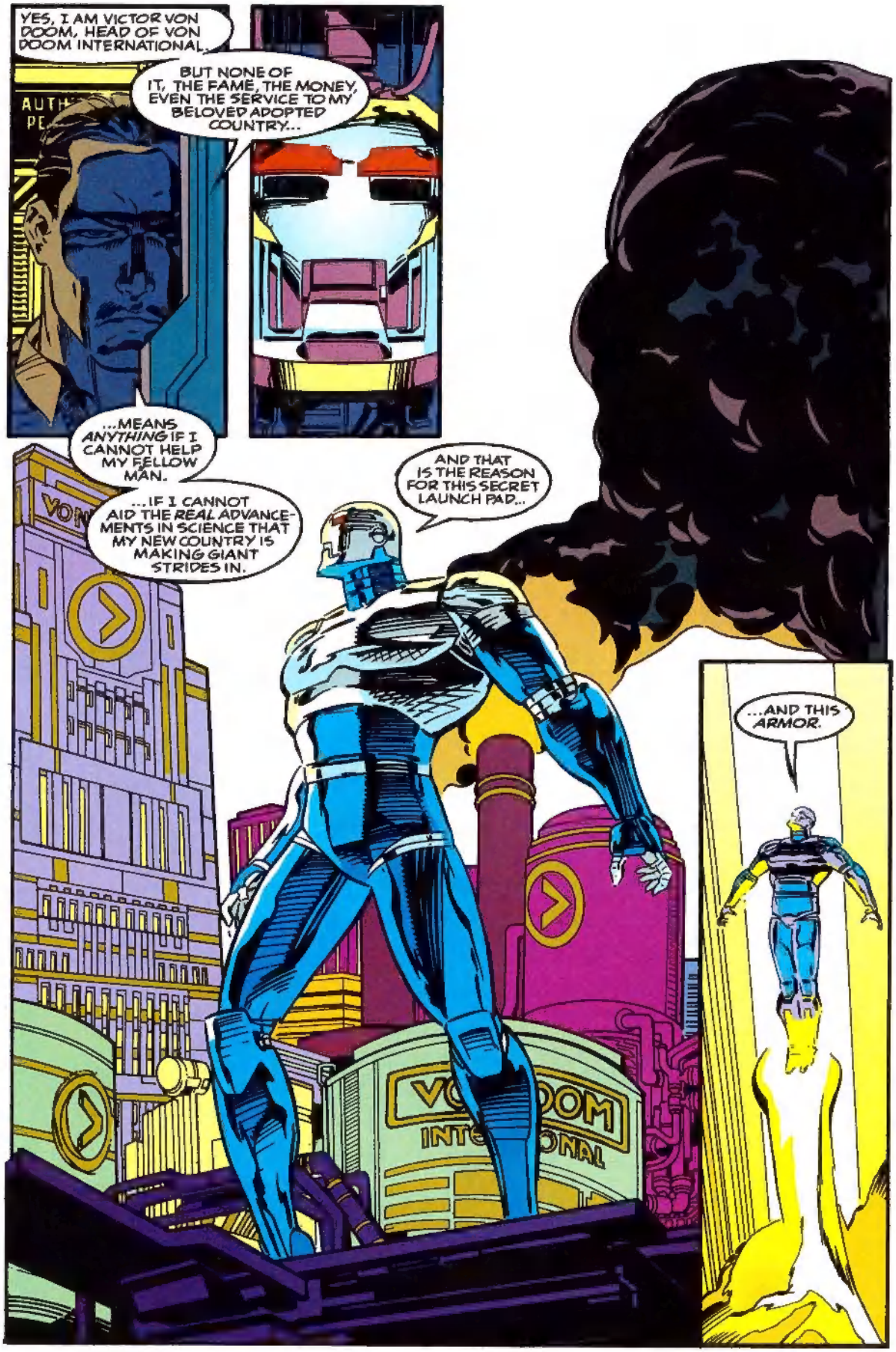

"HE'LL PAY WITH HIS COUNTRY... THEN WITH HIS SOUL."
SO... YOU'RE SOMETHING OF AN AUTOMATED ORACLE.
MORE THAN A MERE SEER.
THE GATE IS A VECTOR TO INFINITE WORLDS OF WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN... WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN.
PERHAPS YOU CAN FIND YOUR PAST WITHIN.
I SENSE AN ENTITY BEHIND THIS... "GATE."
WHY CAN YOU NOT JOIN ME?
THE KAPPA-ALPHA FREQUENCY HAS ONLY AN EFFICIENCY OF 99 PER CENT.
NOT ENOUGH FOR ME TO PASS THROUGH COMPLETELY...
...BUT ENOUGH FOR THIS!
TOUCH MY HAND, DOOM! I WILL TAKE YOU ON A JOURNEY TO DISCOVER WHAT YOUR PAST MAY HAVE BEEN LIKE!

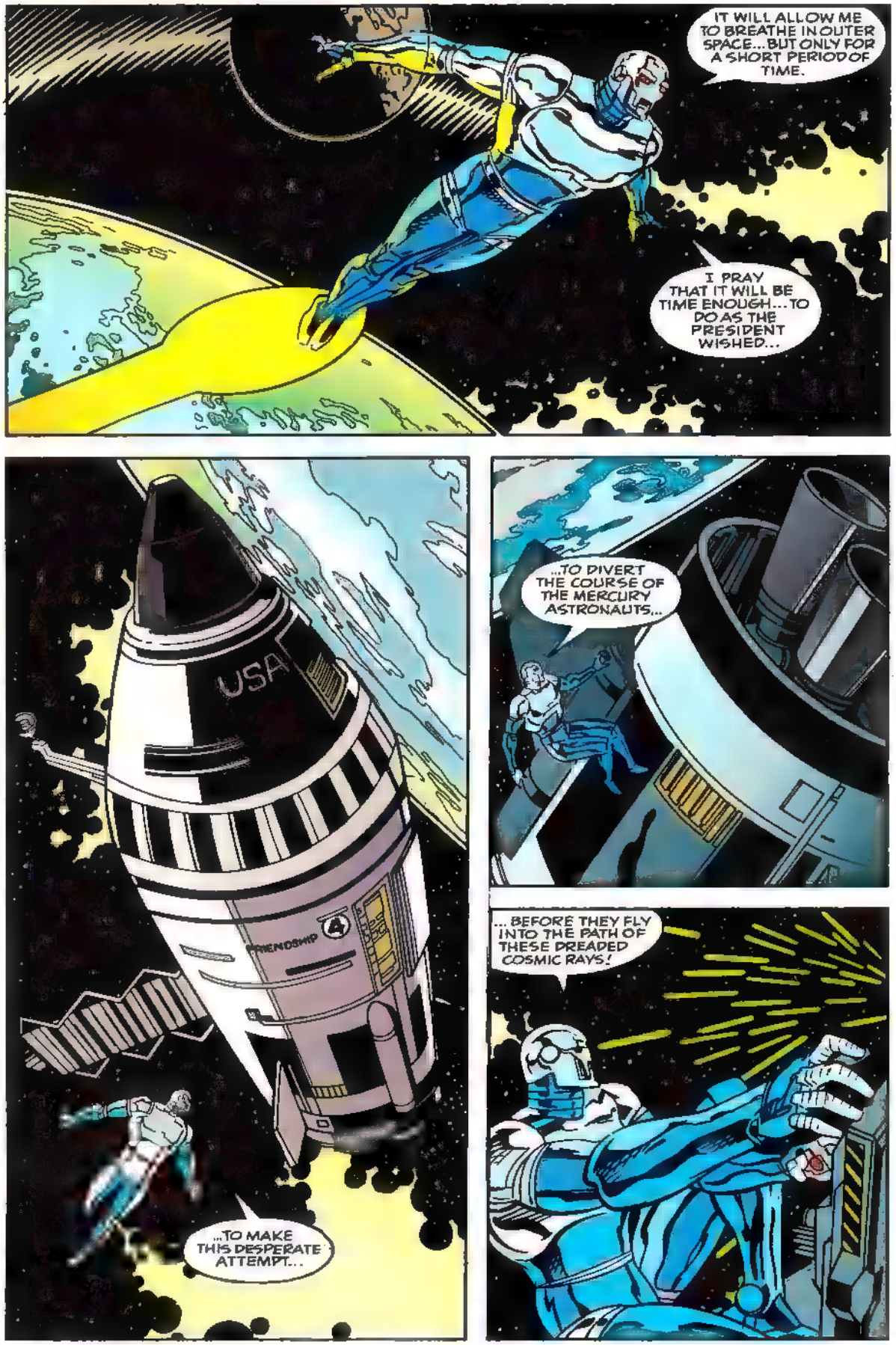
I THINK HE'S GONNA GO FOR IT, SIR!
I KNEW HE COULDN'T RESIST THIS!
DOOM'S SUPERSTITIOUS LATVERIAN BACKWATER CURIOSITY WOULD GET THE BETTER OF HIM! WHAT CAN YOU SAY ABOUT A MAN WHO KEEPS A FORTUNE TELLER IN HIS CABINET?
ARE WE FEEDING THE COMPUTER PROJECTION OF DOOM'S PAST THROUGH THE GATE?
Er, Mr. STONE... THE PORTAL SEEMS TO BE ACTING ON ITS OWN ACCORD.
"WHAAAAT?"
"I'M AFRAID SO, SIR. ALL WE CAN DO IS WAIT."
DOOM TRUSTS NO ONE.
THIS DEVICE WILL ENABLE ME TO MAKE CONTACT... WITHOUT YOUR "TOUCHING" THE ROYAL PRESENCE DIRECTLY!
SPEAK, ORACLE!
COME CLOSER...

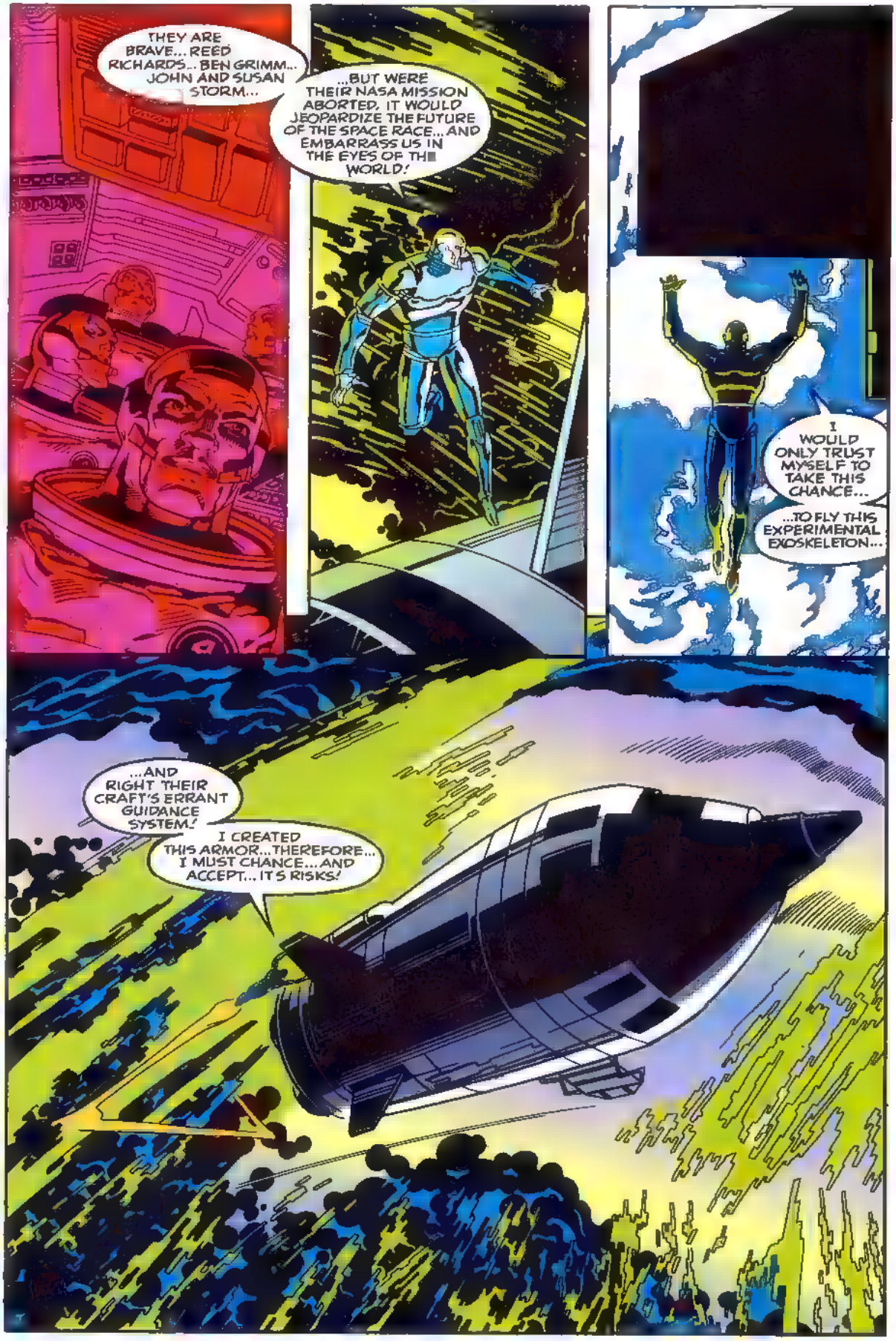
EYYAAARRGHH!
LEARN WHAT I HAVE TO IMPART!
AND REMEMBER... KNOWLEDGE...CAN BE PAINFUL!


I AM VICTOR VON DOOM.
MILLIONAIRE.
I OWN A MANSION AND A YACHT.
INDUSTRIALIST. INVENTOR. PATRIOT.
MILLIONS OF PEOPLE DEPEND ON ME FOR THEIR DAILY BREAD.
STILL MORE DEPEND ON ME... FOR THE PLENITUDE OF DECISIONS I MUST MAKE ON A DAILY BASIS.
PAN AM
NOK NOK!
DOCTOR VON DOOM! IT'S TIME!
YOUR BRAIN TRUST AWAITS!
SHOW THEM IN!


Dr. OCTAVIUS, BIONICS.
THE IMPROVEMENTS YOU MADE IN THE ARTIFICIAL LIMB DESIGN WILL SET US AHEAD OF--
PROFESSOR LEE, SOCIOLOGY.
THIS NEW FORMAT YOU INVENTED TO RECORD MY LECTURES IS FAR SUPERIOR TO THE TAPES I--
Dr. PARKER, BIOLOGIST.
YOUR INSIGHTS INTO THE EFFECTS OF RADIATION ON THE LOWER ORDERS OF INSECTS ARE AMAZING.
SHOULD AN IRRADIATED SPIDER, FOR EXAMPLE, COME IN CONTACT WITH--
FORGIVE ME. YOU ARE...
Ms. BOUVIER. FROM YOUR COMMUNICATIONS STAFF.
I WAS ASKED TO DELIVER THIS TELEGRAM.
Dr. VON DOOM, THIS IS VITAL TO--
IF I COULD JUST GET A MOMENT--
Dr. VON DOOM, I--
YOU COULD GET MY ATTENTION... WITHOUT A TELEGRAM, Ms. BOUVIER.
...IT'S FROM THE WHITE HOUSE.
I WAS HOPING I COULD GET YOUR ATTENTION.
NOW WHAT IS SO IMPORTANT THAT JACK CAN'T...
GOOD LORD.
PLEASE...ALL OF YOU...
LEAVE ME FOR A MINUTE.


YES, I AM VICTOR VON DOOM, HEAD OF VON DOOM INTERNATIONAL.
BUT NONE OF IT, THE FAME, THE MONEY, EVEN THE SERVICE TO MY BELOVED ADOPTED COUNTRY...
...MEANS *ANYTHING* IF I CANNOT HELP MY FELLOW MAN.
...IF I CANNOT AID THE *REAL* ADVANCEMENTS IN SCIENCE THAT MY NEW COUNTRY IS MAKING GIANT STRIDES IN.
AND THAT IS THE REASON FOR THIS SECRET LAUNCH PAD...
...AND THIS *ARMOR*.

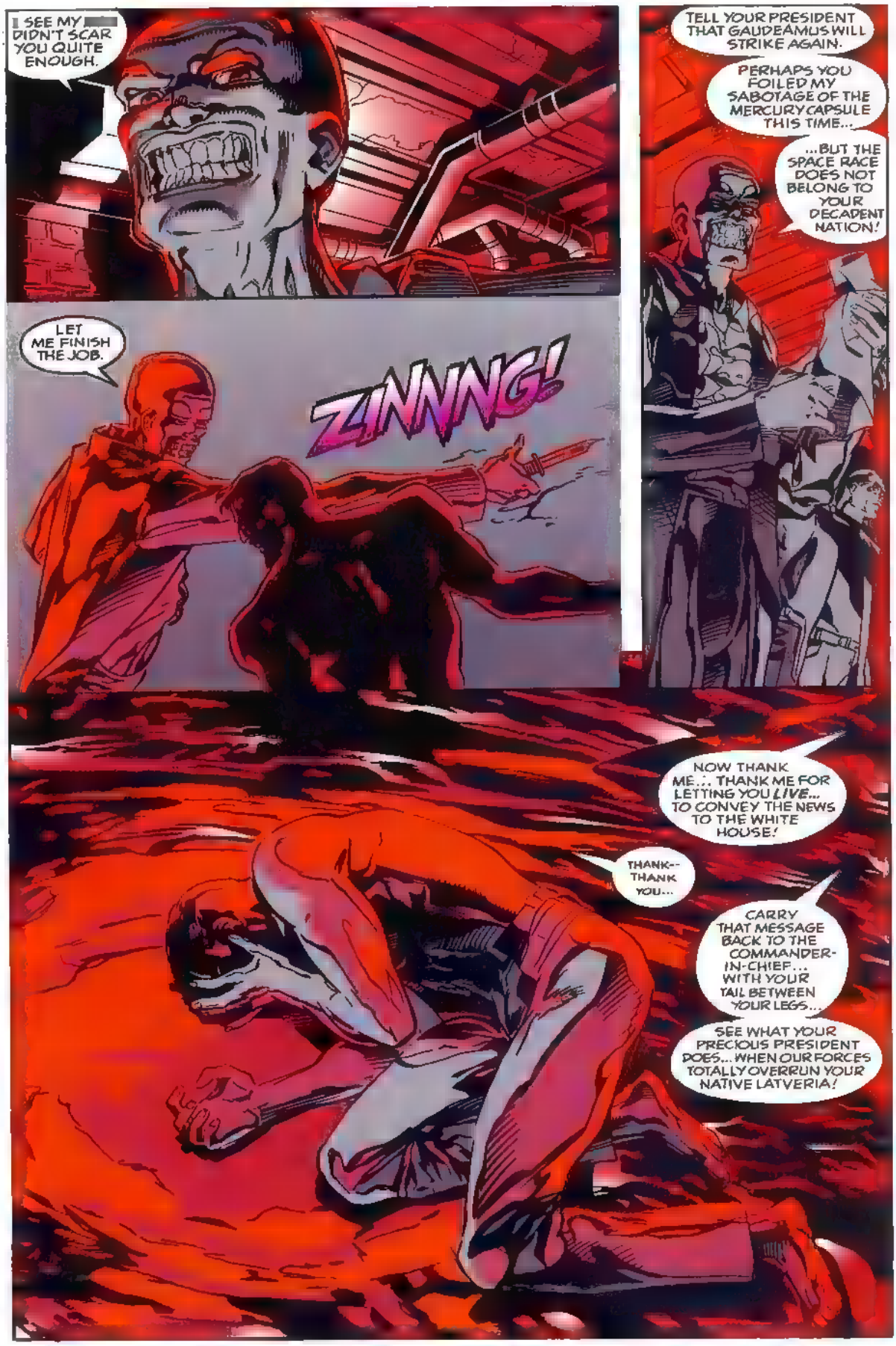

IT WILL ALLOW ME TO BREATHE IN OUTER SPACE... BUT ONLY FOR A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME.
I PRAY THAT IT WILL BE TIME ENOUGH... TO DO AS THE PRESIDENT WISHED...
USA
FRIENDSHIP 4
...TO MAKE THIS DESPERATE ATTEMPT...
...TO DIVERT THE COURSE OF THE MERCURY ASTRONAUTS...
... BEFORE THEY FLY INTO THE PATH OF THESE DREADED COSMIC RAYS!


THEY ARE BRAVE... REED RICHARDS... BEN GRIMM... JOHN AND SUSAN STORM...
...BUT WERE THEIR NASA MISSION ABORTED, IT WOULD JEOPARDIZE THE FUTURE OF THE SPACE RACE... AND EMBARRASS US IN THE EYES OF THE WORLD!
I WOULD ONLY TRUST MYSELF TO TAKE THIS CHANCE...
...TO FLY THIS EXPERIMENTAL EXOSKELETON...
...AND RIGHT THEIR CRAFT'S ERRANT GUIDANCE SYSTEM!
I CREATED THIS ARMOR... THEREFORE... I MUST CHANCE... AND ACCEPT... IT'S RISKS!

A COOL, CRISP MORNING IN DALLAS. WHAT COULD BE NICER?
IF AN ELECTION WERE HELD TOMORROW, I WOULDN'T BE SURPRISED IF THIS CROWD VOTED YOU FOR PRESIDENT.
ALAS, THE CONSTITUTION STIPULATES THAT SINCE I AM FOREIGN-BORN, I AM INELIGIBLE.
BESIDES, THE PUBLIC LIFE IS NOT FOR ME.
THERE ARE TOO MANY UNSCRUPULOUS INDIVIDUALS WHO WOULD PREFER THAT MY ADVANCE BE HALTED... BY ANY MEANS AT THEIR DISPOSAL!

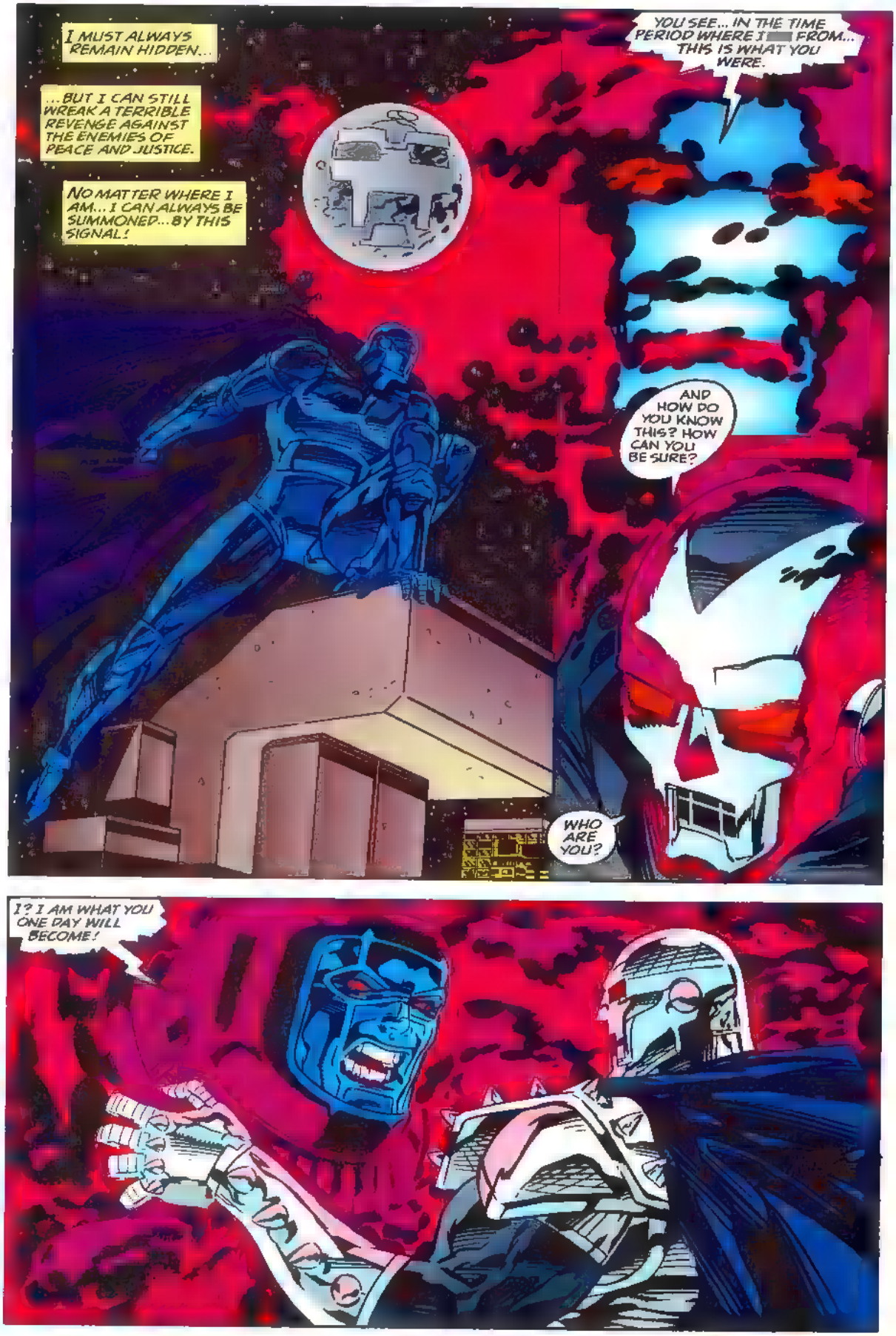
BLAMMMM
VICTOR!
THE BULLET GRAZED MY FACE...
I'M IN PAIN... LOSING BLOOD...
WHY DOES NO ONE TRY TO FIND MY ASSASSIN?

VON DOOM! STAY PUT! WE'LL GET AN AMBULANCE!
NO! DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND?
THIS IS BIGGER THAN ME!
AMERICA'S FOES...SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO GO FREE...
...FREE TO STRIKE AGAIN...
FREE TO...
...COMPROMISE...
...OUR LIBERTY...
KANNNG!
...OHhhh...

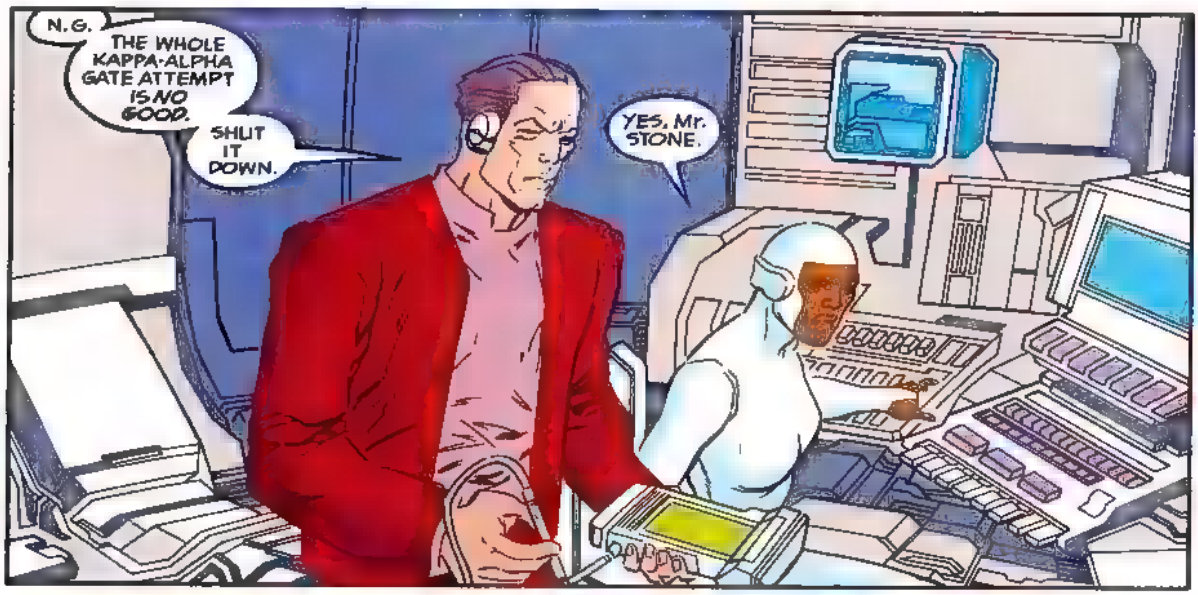

I SEE MY [redacted] DIDN'T SCAR YOU QUITE ENOUGH.
TELL YOUR PRESIDENT THAT GAUDEAMUS WILL STRIKE AGAIN.
PERHAPS YOU FOILED MY SABOTAGE OF THE MERCURY CAPSULE THIS TIME...
...BUT THE SPACE RACE DOES NOT BELONG TO YOUR DECADENT NATION!
LET ME FINISH THE JOB.
ZINNNG!
NOW THANK ME... THANK ME FOR LETTING YOU *LIVE*... TO CONVEY THE NEWS TO THE WHITE HOUSE!
THANK-- THANK YOU...
CARRY THAT MESSAGE BACK TO THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF... WITH YOUR TAIL BETWEEN YOUR LEGS...
SEE WHAT YOUR PRECIOUS PRESIDENT DOES... WHEN OUR FORCES TOTALLY OVERRUN YOUR NATIVE LATVERIA!

NIGHT. MANHATTAN...
JUST KEEP THOSE HANDS WHERE WE CAN SEE 'EM!
WE'VE GOT THE CARGO!
GET THEM TO OPEN THE CRATE! NOW!
WHAT IS IT, GAUDEAMUS?
SOME KIND OF TORPEDO... OR BOMB?
AN ATOMIC BOMB, TO BE EXACT.
IF EVERY NATION HAS THE SECRET OF THIS WEAPON, AMERICA WILL LOSE ITS SUPERIORITY!
THE OTHER COUNTRIES WILL PAY ME A HIGH PRICE TO GET IT, TOO! MY FORTUNE IS ASSURED!
NOT IF I HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY ABOUT IT!

YOUR HENCHMEN...
...WILL TASTE...
...THE COLD STEEL...
...OF MY ARMOR...
BUT FOR YOU, GAUDEAMUS...
...I RESERVE...
...A SPECIAL FATE!
NO! NOOOOOOOOOO
SAY "THANK YOU."


I MUST ALWAYS REMAIN HIDDEN...
...BUT I CAN STILL WREAK A TERRIBLE REVENGE AGAINST THE ENEMIES OF PEACE AND JUSTICE.
NO MATTER WHERE I AM... I CAN ALWAYS BE SUMMONED... BY THIS SIGNAL!
YOU SEE... IN THE TIME PERIOD WHERE I [redacted] FROM... THIS IS WHAT YOU WERE.
AND HOW DO YOU KNOW THIS? HOW CAN YOU BE SURE?
WHO ARE YOU?
I? I AM WHAT YOU ONE DAY WILL BECOME!

NEVER! YOU LIE!
AM I TO BELIEVE THAT I COULD EVER BE OBSESSED WITH THE AFFAIRS OF A COUNTRY NOT MY OWN, OR THE PETTY PROBLEMS OF A PEOPLE WHO SWEAR NO LOYALTY TO ME...
I AM NOT HERE TO SOLVE THEIR DEFICIENCIES OF DIPLOMACY OR COPPLE THEIR CRIME PROBLEM!
I AM
I AM FIT ONLY TO KILL!

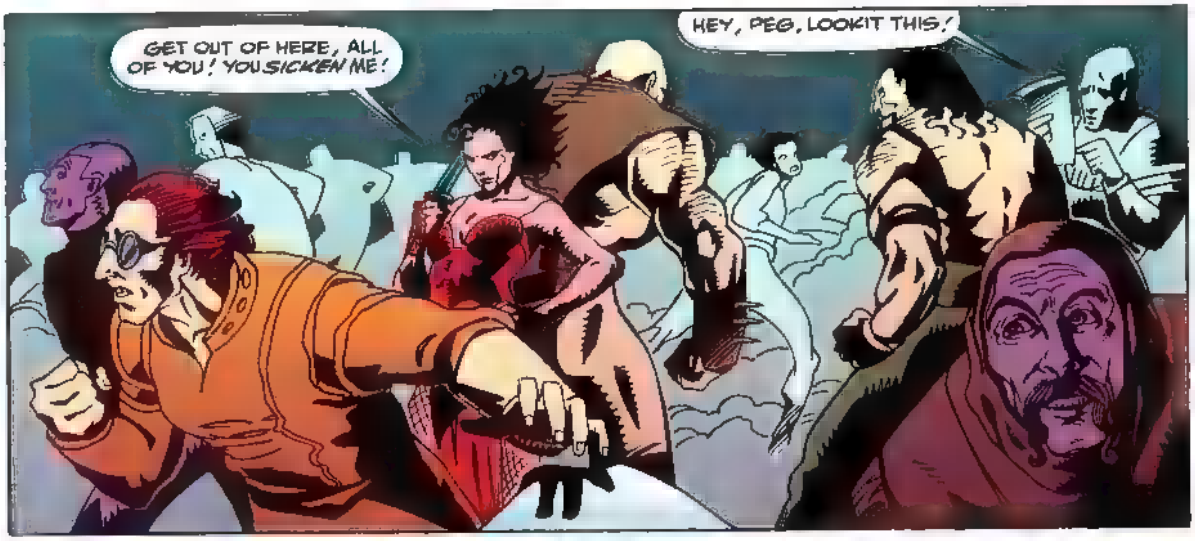

N.G.
THE WHOLE KAPPA-ALPHA GATE ATTEMPT IS NO GOOD.
SHUT IT DOWN.
YES, Mr. STONE.

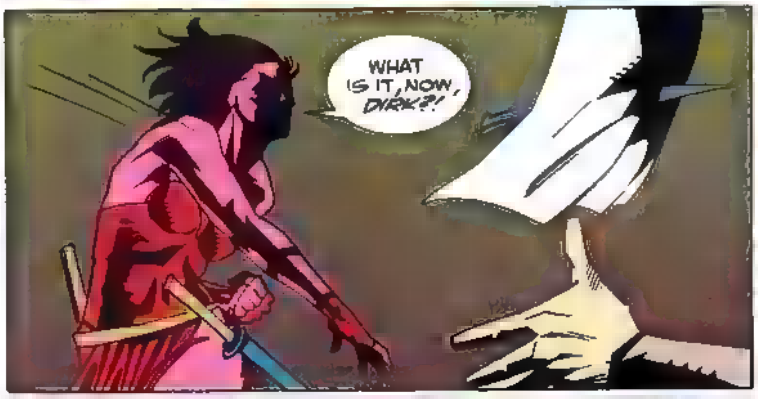
THE NEXT TIME I TRY TO RETAKE VALHALLA FOR ALCHEMAX, I WILL NOT DO SO BY SUCH COVERT MEANS.
I'LL BE A LOT LESS... SUBTLE ABOUT IT!
K-A
20 99%
IN BUSINESS, AS IN WAR, SUBTLETY DOESN'T PAY.
K-A
NG
20
99%

Stan Lee presents:
Midsummer Knights 2051
Tonight
COME ONE, COME ALL! WHETHER THROW-BACK, FREAKER OR SCAVENGER!
TONIGHT ONLY, A SPECIAL PERFORMANCE FOR YOUR EDIFICATION AND ENJOYMENT!
NOW, YOU, SIR, LOOK LIKE A MAN OF DISCRIMINATING TASTES. IF YOU'D LIKE, GOOD PUCK CAN GET YOU FRONT AND CENTER.
BEST SPOT, THEY SAY, FOR WATCHING MAN'S SECOND OLDEST PROFESSION...
OR IS IT THE FIRST? I ALWAYS GET THEM CONFUSED.
"opening night" or "the play's the thing"
In this the comic year of a tale of downtown by....
DAN SLOTT SCRIBE
REBECCA GUAY ETCHER
JOE RUBINSTEIN EMBELLISHER
TOM DEFALCO • KING
ROD OLLERENSHAW ILLUMINATOR
ROBBIE BUSCH PAINTER
JOEY CAVALIERI IMPRESARIO

PEG'S COMIN' THROUGH.
OUT OF THE WAY, FOOL!
PEG.
ONLY ONE PERSON HAS TO [redacted] IT FOR OTHERS TO ECHO.
PEG.
MORE TO JOIN IN, AS THE ECHOES BUZZ AND HUM.
PEG.
THE MARKET COMES TO A DEAD STOP.
PEG.
PEG.
HUMBLETY PEG, THE UNDISPUTED CRIME QUEEN OF DOWNTOWN'S GORE ALLEY...
JONAS? JONAS FINN?
Y-YES, MISTRESS PEG.
YOU'VE [redacted] BARTERING IN MY MARKET FOR MANY YEARS NOW, HAVEN'T YOU, JONAS?
SEVEN N'A HALF, MA'AM.
AND WHAT WARES DO YOU TRADE WITH TODAY, JONAS?
FLAK VESTS, MA'AM. FEEL FREE TO TAKE ONE ON THE HOUSE. SHOCK [redacted] IF THEY AIN'T THE BEST QUALITY. STOP ANY MANNER A' BULLET OR KNIFE...

AH! NOW WE GET TO THE POINT!
DID YOU EVER BOTHER TO THINK, JONAS?
THINK WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF EVERYONE HAD ONE OF THESE "BEST QUALITY VESTS"!
HOLD HIM, PIKE.
NO... PLEASE...
IMAGINE, JONAS, EVERYONE ON GORE ALLEY FEELING SAFE.
THEIR FRAGILE, BEATING HEARTS PROTECTED FROM ONE OF MUMBLETY PEG'S BLADES.
WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO PEG THEN, HMM?
SLIKT
NO, I'D RATHER HAVE YOU ALL LIKE THIS!
WITH NOTHING BUT SCRAPS OF CLOTH...
WEAK SKIN...
SOFT MUSCLE...
AND BRITTLE BONES.
SPLUTCH!
LISTEN TO ME, ALL OF YOU.
[redacted] ALLEY IS MINE! THE MARKET, THE PAVEMENT, THE BUILDINGS, THE PEOPLE, THE SKY! MINE!
AND ANYTHING I DON'T LIKE, GETS CUT FROM THE SCENE!"


GET OUT OF HERE, ALL OF YOU! YOU SICKEN ME!
HEY, PEG, LOOKIT THIS!


WHAT IS IT, NOW, DIRK?!

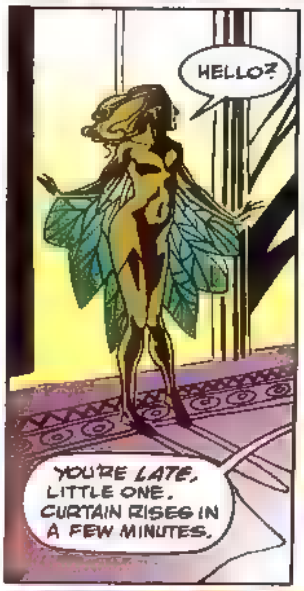
WHAT?!
THUK

"GRAND OPENING, GORE ALLEY THEATRE. SPECIAL PERFORMANCE, TONIGHT."
"ADMISSION: REASONABLY PRICED."
A NEW BUSINESS IN THE ALLEY? WELL, I'LL JUST HAVE TO SEE ABOUT GETTING MY CUT!

DID YOU HEAR? SHE'S TAKEN THE BAIT!

SO, WHAT NOW, BOTTOM?
THE CAST, PUCK. ASSEMBLE THE CAST.

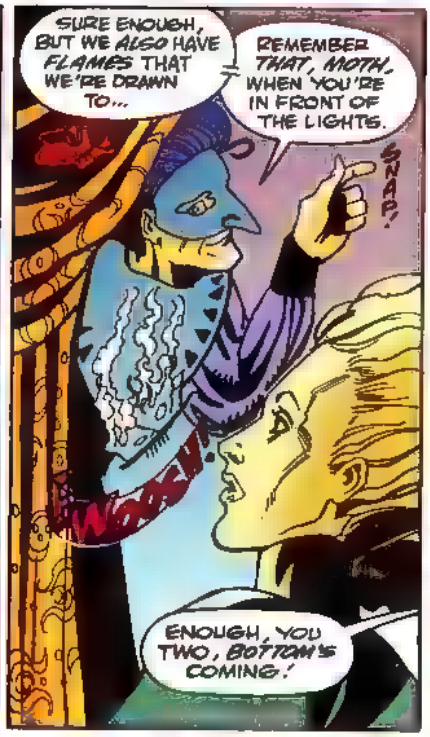
SHE'S BEEN STANDING IN THAT DOORWAY FOR ALMOST AN HOUR NOW.
"EASY, MUSTARD. YOUNG MOTH KNOWS THAT THE JOURNEY OF A LIFETIME BEGINS WITH A SINGLE STEP.
"AND THE NEXT ONE SHE TAKES WILL, NO DOUBT, CHANGE HER LIFE FOREVER."
NOW PLAYING


HELLO?
YOU'RE LATE, LITTLE ONE. CURTAIN RISES IN A FEW MINUTES.

SORRY, BLOSSOM, I WAS...
NERVOUS?
OF COURSE NOT.
THERE'S NO SHAME IN IT, MOTH.

THIS IS OUR FIRST PERFORMANCE. ALL OF US HAVE A FEW...

...BUTTER-FLIES IN OUR STOMACHS.


SURE ENOUGH, BUT WE ALSO HAVE FLAMES THAT WE'RE DRAWN TO...
REMEMBER THAT, MOTH, WHEN YOU'RE IN FRONT OF THE LIGHTS.
SNAP!
WOOSH!
ENOUGH, YOU TWO, BOTTOM'S COMING!

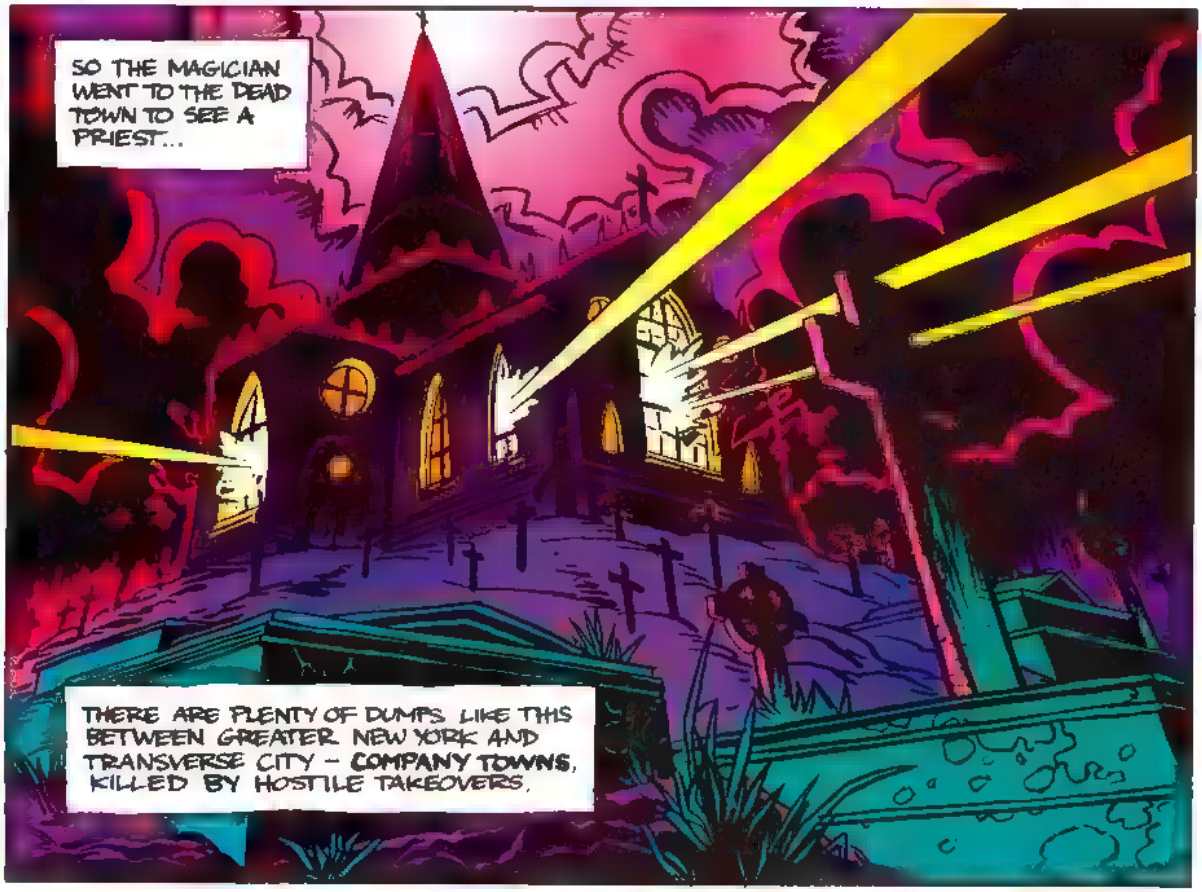
YOU ARE WELL MET, MY KNIGHTS OF MIDSUMMER. ARE YOU READY TO ROUSE AN ART FROM A CENTURY-LONG SLEEP?
IT SHALL SURELY ASK, "WHERE'S MY STAGE, MY ACTORS, MY AUDIENCE?" AND WE SHALL RESPOND, "HERE, GOOD SIR, AT PLAY."
SO? LET'S GET TO IT! LET'S ALL BREAK A LEG.
HE BETTER NOT, EH, COBWEB?
WHY'S THAT, PUCK?
WE'LL HAVE TO SHOOT HIM.
PLACES. THE HOUSE IS OPEN, AND OUR PATRON HAS ARRIVED.
GREETINGS, MISTRESS PEG, I AM BOTTOM, PROPRIETOR OF THIS PLAYHOUSE. MY THEATER [redacted] HONORED BY YOUR PRESENCE, MA'AM.
NICELY DONE, HORSE-FACE. MOST NEWCOMERS IN THE ALLEY SHOW ME A LOT OF ATTITUDE AT FIRST.
THEN, OF COURSE, I HAVE TO SLICE IT OFF.
MASTER PUCK, PLEASE SHOW OUR GUESTS TO THEIR SEATS. THE PLAY'S ABOUT TO BEGIN.

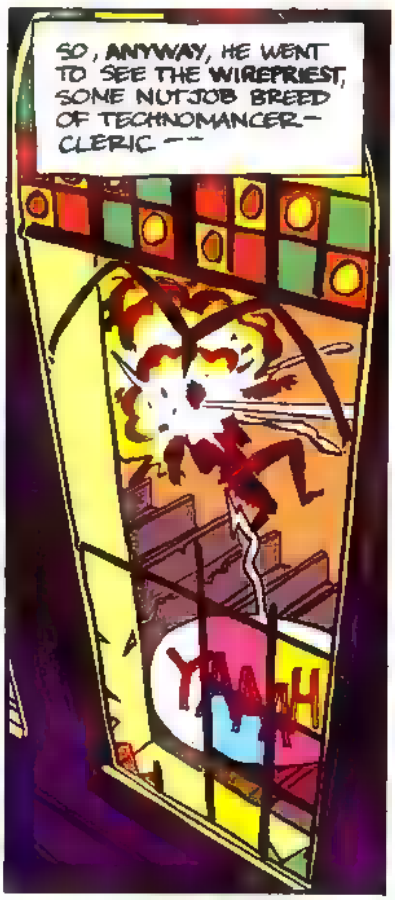
THIS "PLAY" THING YOU DO HERE... WHAT DO YOU GET OUT OF IT?
--A TINGLY, WARM FEELING INSIDE.
NO, YOU FOOL, THE TAKE, THE PROFIT!
TRUST ME, MANY WILL PROFIT FROM TONIGHT'S SHOW! BUT, LOOK...
"IT'S STARTING."
WHY, LO, HERE COMES OL' BUMBLETY MEG!
HEY, THERE, MEG. IS THAT A SCABBARD IN YOUR POCKET, OR AM I JUST HAPPY TO SEE YOU?
NOBODY'S EVER HAPPY TO SEE ME, FINNY JOHN!
AND DO YOU KNOW WHY?
WAIT. DON'T TELL ME, I'LL TAKE A STAB AT IT...
WELL, THAT'S WHY!
OH, YEAH?!...
STOP IT!
HA HA HA HA HA HA
ALL OF YOU! THIS ISN'T FUNNY!
STOP IT, OR I'LL--
WHAT THE SHOCK?!
WHAT'S GOING ON?

HA HA HA
SURPRISE. YOU'RE NOT IN THE AUDIENCE, PEG, YOU'RE ON THE STAGE.
A GUEST PERFORMER.
PART OF THE SHOW.
YOU WANT A SHOW? I'LL GIVE YOU A SHOW!
C'MON, MAN, YOU CAN DO BETTER! ALL OF DOWNTOWN'S WATCHING!
DIRK, SHIV, PIKE-- GET THEM!
POINK!
THWACK!
HA!!!
YOU! POKE FUN AT ME, WILL YOU?!
WELL, HERE'S WHERE I POKE BACK!
ONE SIDE, MOTH.
KEEP BACK, PEG. THE GIRL'S UNDER MY PROTECTION.
I DON'T CARE! EITHER WAY, YOU'LL ALL LEARN...
KLANG

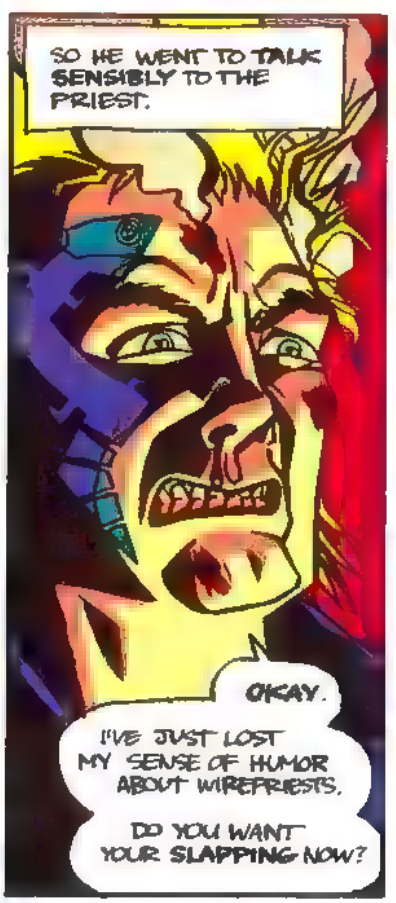
..THAT [redacted] ONE MOCKS MUMBLETY PEG! NO ONE!
KLANG!
GET USED TO IT, PEG, MORSE SHALL COME TO PASS.
YOU LOOK MORE THE FOOL, BESTED BY AN ASS!
TINGG!
NEVER!
NONE IS MY EQUAL TO A BLADE!
ESPECIALLY YOU!
TRUE. THAT'S WHY I CHEAT.
NO!
GORE ALLEY IS NO LONGER YOURS, PEG.
NOT THE MARKET, THE PAVEMENT, NOR THE BUILDINGS.
NEITHER THE PEOPLE, NOR THE SKY.
LOOKS LIKE THE DIRECTOR IS SICK OF YOUR CHARACTER, PEG.
YOU'RE BEING CUT FROM THE SCENE.
THIS IS MY BIT! YOU'RE STEALING MY BIT!

MY DEAR PEG...
...THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS AN ORIGINAL IDEA.
IT'S ALL HOW YOU HANDLE IT...
IN THE EXECUTION!"
I THINK IT WENT WELL TONIGHT.
YES, PUCK, A CROWD PLEASER, BUT FAR FROM ART.
THINK OF IT AS A DRESS REHEARSAL--
--A CHANCE TO BECOME FAMILIAR WITH [redacted] CHARACTERS, SETS AND PROPS.
IN THE MEANTIME, THERE'S NOTHING LEFT TO DO, BUT PRINT UP MORE PLAYBILLS...
...AND WAIT FOR THE REVIEWS.
Curtain

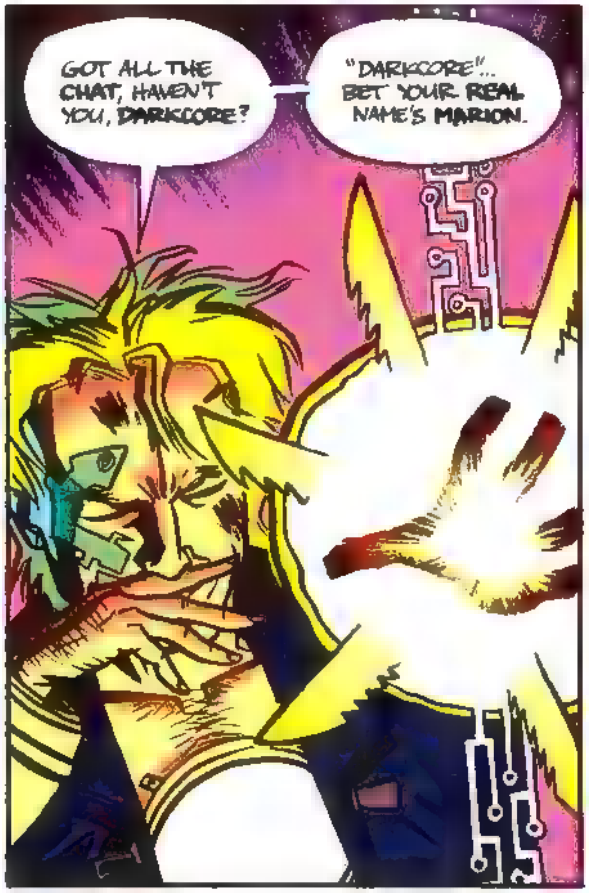

SO THE MAGICIAN WENT TO THE DEAD TOWN TO SEE A PRIEST...
THERE ARE PLENTY OF DUMPS LIKE THIS BETWEEN GREATER NEW YORK AND TRANSVERSE CITY - COMPANY TOWNS, KILLED BY HOSTILE TAKEOVERS.


SO, ANYWAY, HE WENT TO SEE THE WIREPRIEST, SOME NUTJOB BREED OF TECHNOMANCER-CLERIC --
YAAH

-- BELONGS TO A SECT OF SIMILAR HEADCASES CALLED THE RED HERMITAGE.
THEY HAVE THIS THING ABOUT ARRANGING THE END OF THE WORLD AS A POSITIVE FORM OF CREATION, IF THAT MAKES SENSE.

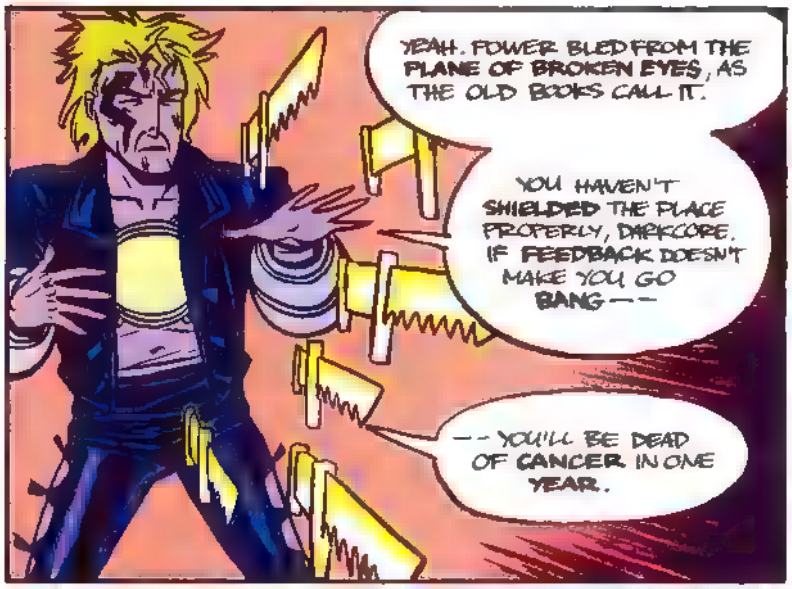

SO HE WENT TO TALK SENSIBLY TO THE PRIEST.
OKAY.
I'VE JUST LOST MY SENSE OF HUMOR ABOUT WIREPRIESTS.
DO YOU WANT YOUR SLAPPING NOW?

OH, AND ARE YOU GOING TO GIVE ME THIS SLAPPING, THEN – CUSTARD HEAD?
IN JUST A FEW MINUTES, YOU'RE GOING TO BE UNABLE TO VISIT THE LITTLE BOY'S ROOM WITHOUT HEAVY TECHNOLOGICAL ASSISTANCE.

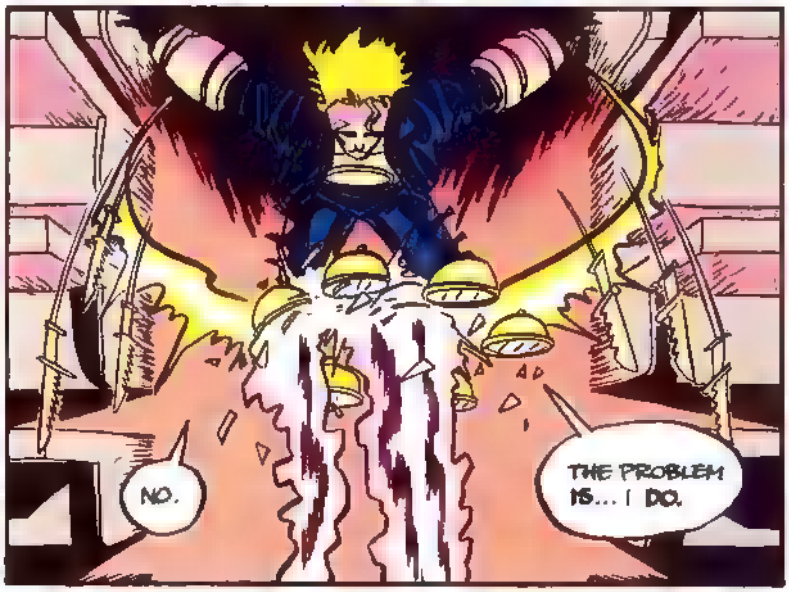

GOT ALL THE CHAT, HAVEN'T YOU, DARKCORE?
"DARKCORE"... BET YOUR REAL NAME'S MARION.

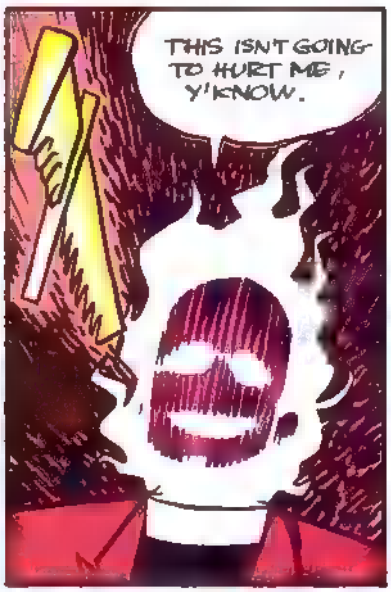
GIVE IT UP.
I'M WIRED INTO THIS CHURCH...

...AND THE CHURCH'S SPIRE IS WIRED TO RECEIVE THE POWER MY HERMITAGE NEEDS.
EXTRADIMENSIONAL ENERGIES, MOVING THROUGH IT INTO ME.


YEAH. POWER BLED FROM THE PLANE OF BROKEN EYES, AS THE OLD BOOKS CALL IT.
YOU HAVEN'T SHIELDED THE PLACE PROPERLY, DARKCORE. IF FEEDBACK DOESN'T MAKE YOU GO BANG——
——YOU'LL BE DEAD OF CANCER IN ONE YEAR.

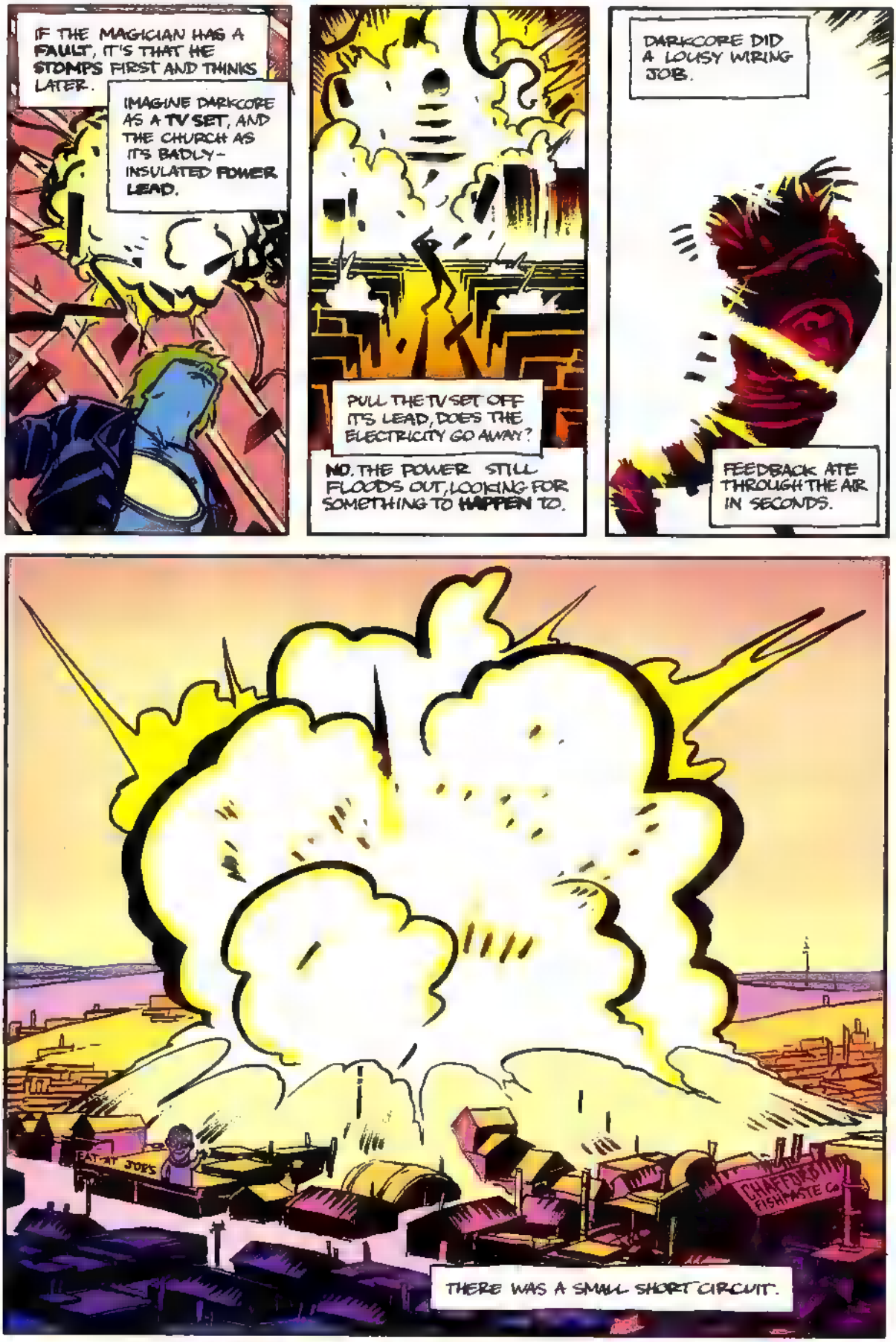
DO I CARE?

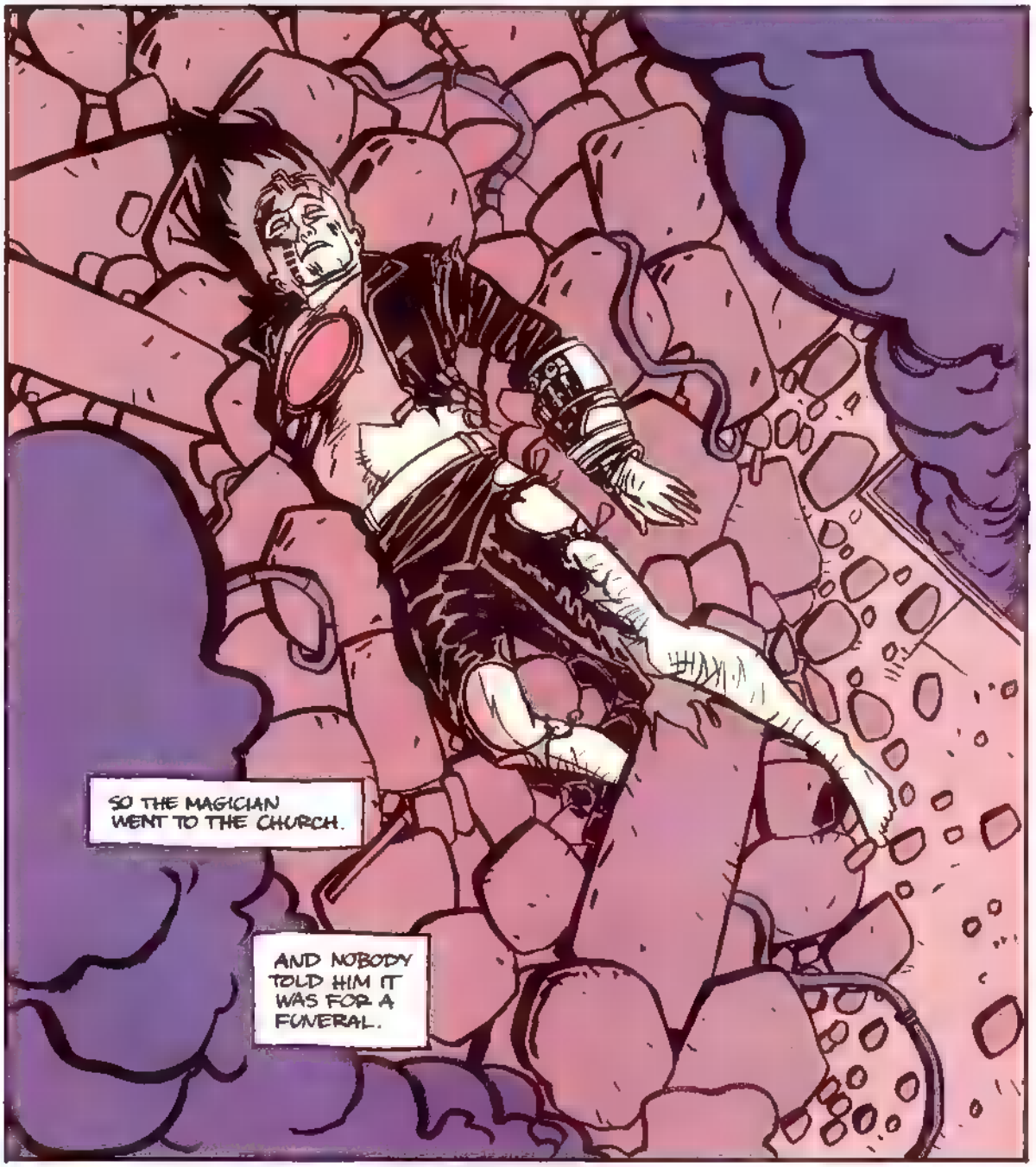

NO.
THE PROBLEM IS... I DO.


THIS ISN'T GOING TO HURT ME, Y'KNOW.

AAAAUURK
I KNOW.
BUT THIS WILL.

COUGH
I... I HEREBY RENOUNCE MY MEMBERSHIP OF THE RED HERMIT - AGE AND ALL THE HERETICAL BELIEFS THEREIN.
YOU WON'T DO ANYTHING UGLY TO ME NOW, RIGHT?
RIGHT.
YOU...
...YOU...
... rotter.
HHKKK.


IF THE MAGICIAN HAS A FAULT, IT'S THAT HE STOMPS FIRST AND THINKS LATER.
IMAGINE DARKCORE AS A TV SET, AND THE CHURCH AS IT'S BADLY-INSULATED POWER LEAD.
PULL THE TV SET OFF IT'S LEAD, DOES THE ELECTRICITY GO AWAY?
NO. THE POWER STILL FLOODS OUT, LOOKING FOR SOMETHING TO HAPPEN TO.
DARKCORE DID A LOUSY WIRING JOB.
FEEDBACK ATE THROUGH THE AIR IN SECONDS.
EAT-AT JOE'S
CHAFFIN'S FISHPASTE Co
THERE WAS A SMALL SHORT CIRCUIT.



[redacted] LEE PRESENTS:

METALSCREAM

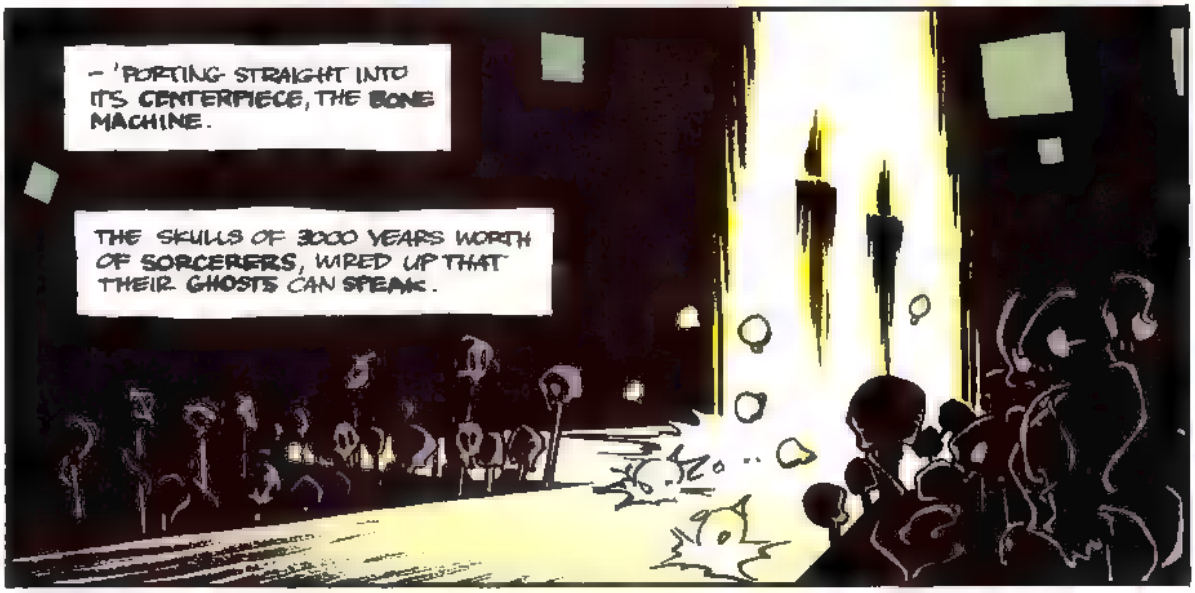
OLD RED-EYES IS BACK

WRITER: [redacted] ELLIS
ARTIST: D'ISRAELI
LETTERER: H.V. DERCI

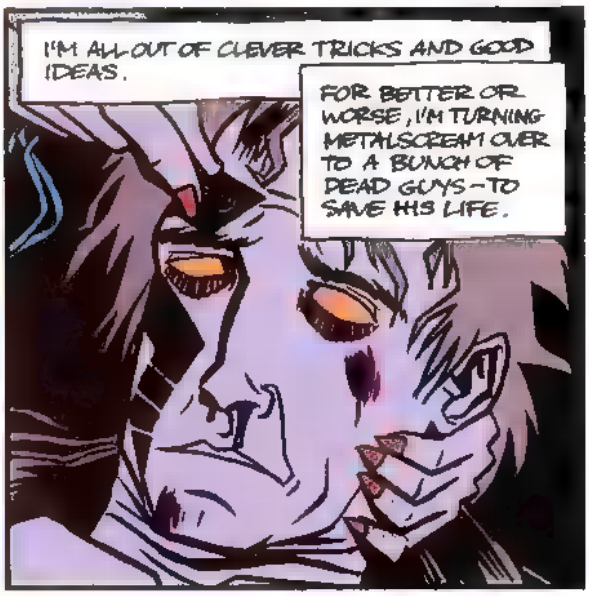
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: TOM DEFALCO
EDITOR: [redacted] CAVALIERI

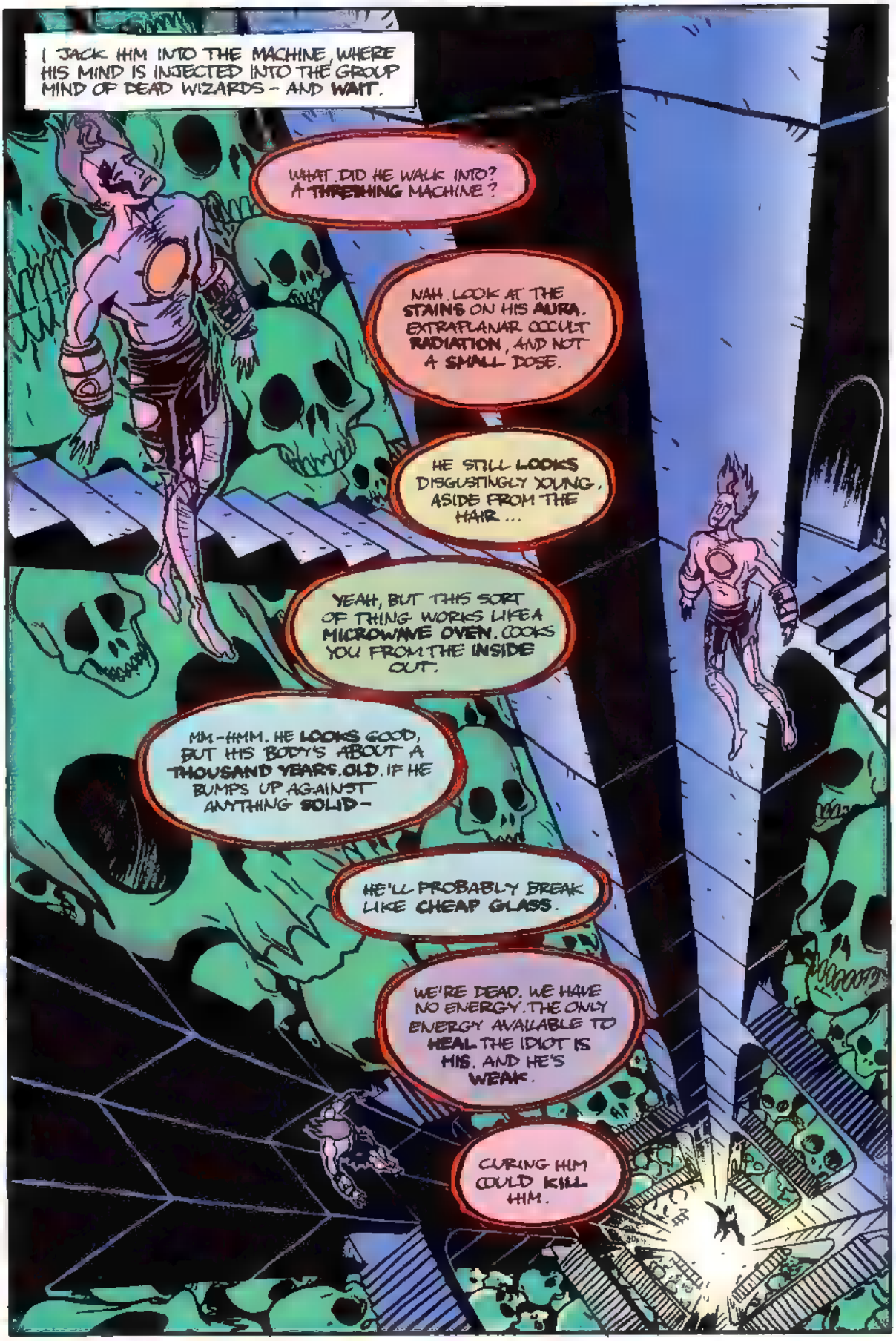
I WATCHED IT ALL.
AND I WAITED AS LONG AS I COULD BEFORE GOING IN.
I'M LITANY KIRKPATRICK, EX-REVOLUTION BABY AND TECH-NOIR CRIMINAL ELEMENT - CURRENTLY IN THE FAITHFUL DISCIPLE GAME.
BOSS?
AWW, BOSS... WHAT DID THAT LITTLE RATSUCKER DO TO YOU?
OKAY, JUST STAY THERE. I'M GETTING US OUT OF HERE.
I LEARNT THE SPELL, BOSS. AIN'T THAT A KICKER?
I FINALLY LEARNT A DECENT SPELL, AND YOU'RE NOT EVEN AWAKE TO SEE IT...
TECH NOIR

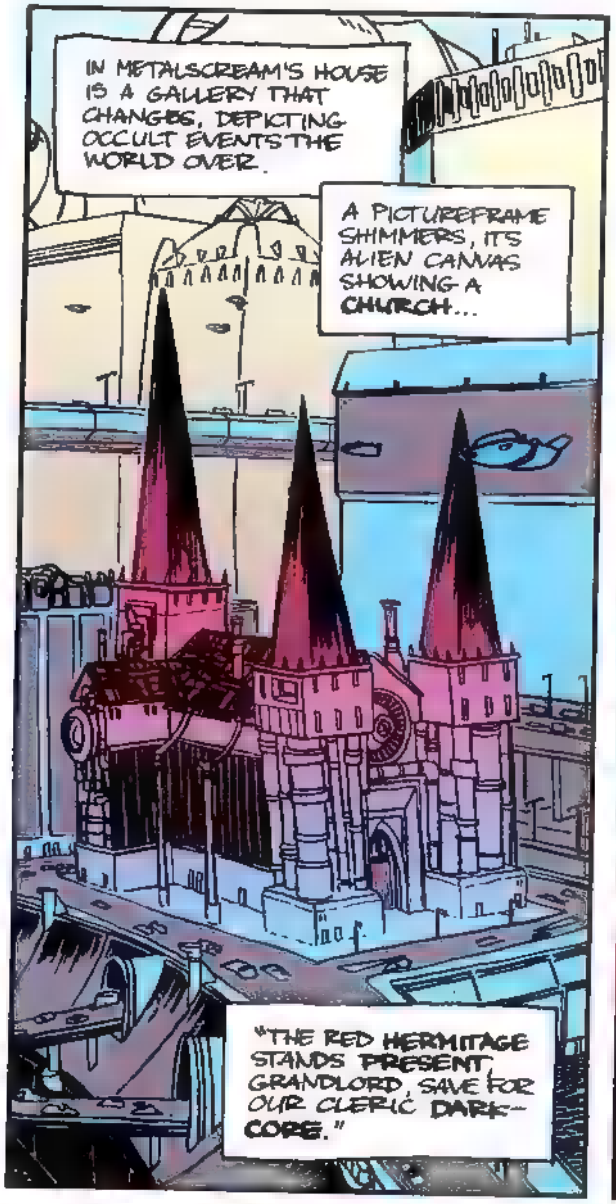
I DRAGGED US BOTH BACK TO THE MANTIC GALLERY IN ARIZONA –
– METALSCREAM'S CLOAKED HOME –


– 'PORTING STRAIGHT INTO IT'S CENTERPIECE, THE BONE MACHINE.
THE SKULLS OF 3000 YEARS WORTH OF SORCERERS, WIRED UP THAT THEIR GHOSTS CAN SPEAK.

THEY TAUGHT HIM MAGIC, IN EXCHANGE FOR HIM TAKING OVER THEIR PREVIOUS WORK ––
– WHICH WAS PREVENTING THE MISUSE OF THE OCCULT.

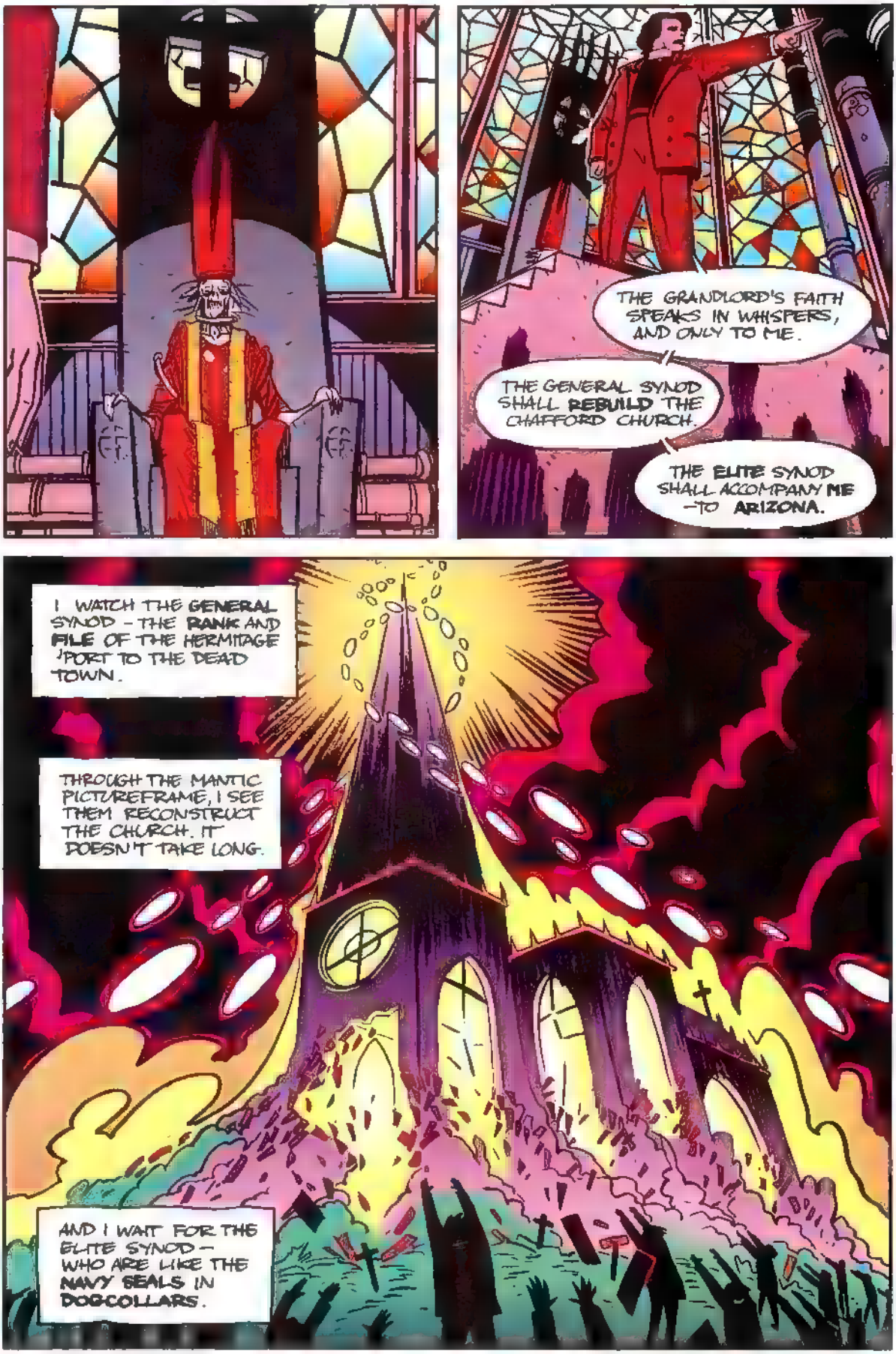

I'M ALL OUT OF CLEVER TRICKS AND GOOD IDEAS.
FOR BETTER OR WORSE, I'M TURNING METALSCREAM OVER TO A BUNCH OF DEAD GUYS – TO SAVE HIS LIFE.

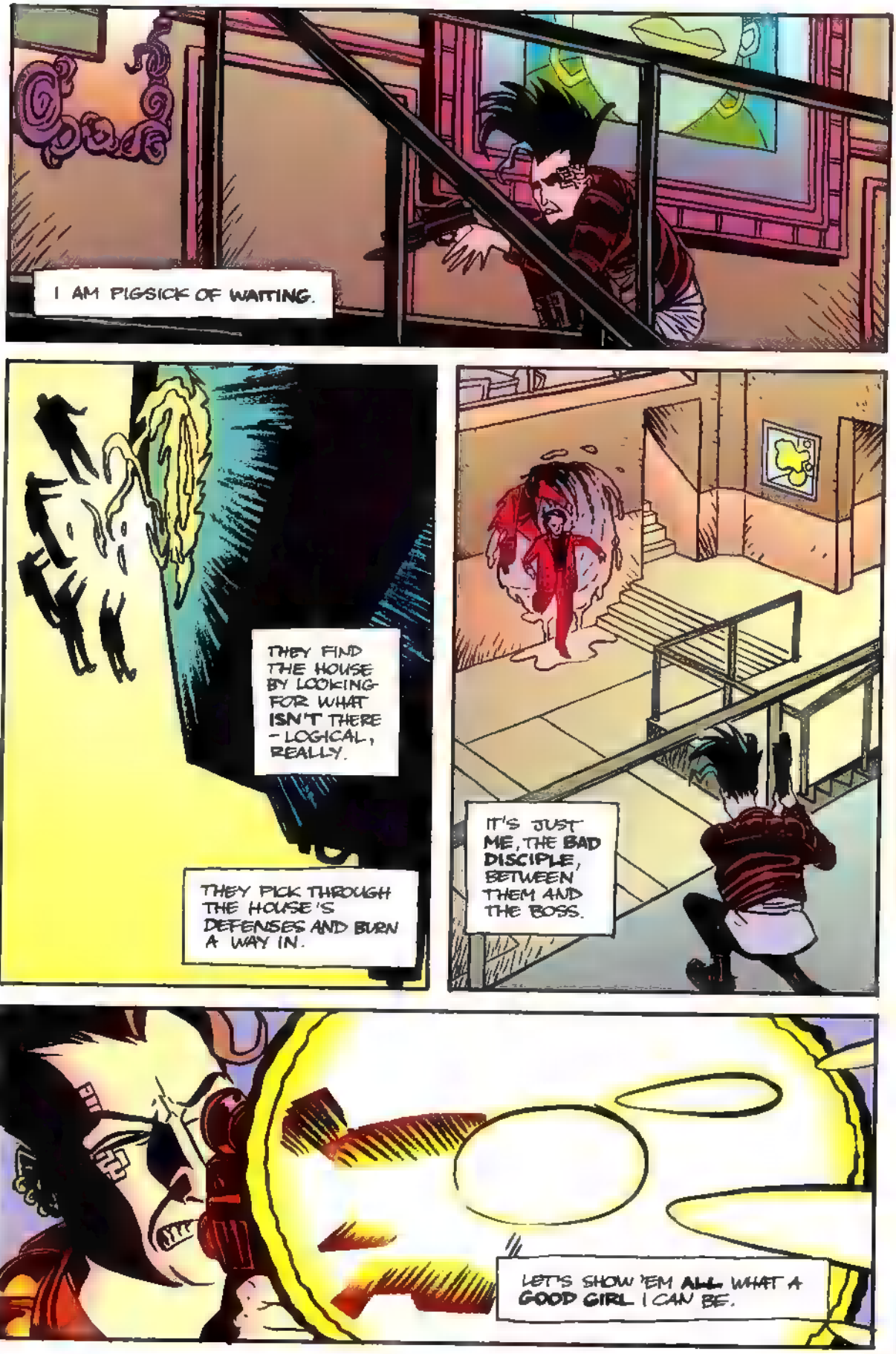

I JACK HIM INTO THE MACHINE, WHERE HIS MIND IS INJECTED INTO THE GROUP MIND OF DEAD WIZARDS - AND WAIT.
WHAT DID HE WALK INTO? A THRESHING MACHINE?
NAH. LOOK AT THE STAINS ON HIS AURA. EXTRAPLANAR OCCULT RADIATION, AND NOT A SMALL DOSE.
HE STILL LOOKS DISGUSTINGLY YOUNG, ASIDE FROM THE HAIR...
YEAH, BUT THIS SORT OF THING WORKS LIKE A MICROWAVE OVEN. COOKS YOU FROM THE INSIDE OUT.
MM-HMM. HE LOOKS GOOD, BUT HIS BODY'S ABOUT A THOUSAND YEARS OLD. IF HE BUMPS UP AGAINST ANYTHING SOLID-
HE'LL PROBABLY BREAK LIKE CHEAP GLASS.
WE'RE DEAD. WE HAVE NO ENERGY. THE ONLY ENERGY AVAILABLE TO HEAL THE IDIOT IS HIS. AND HE'S WEAK.
CURING HIM COULD KILL HIM.

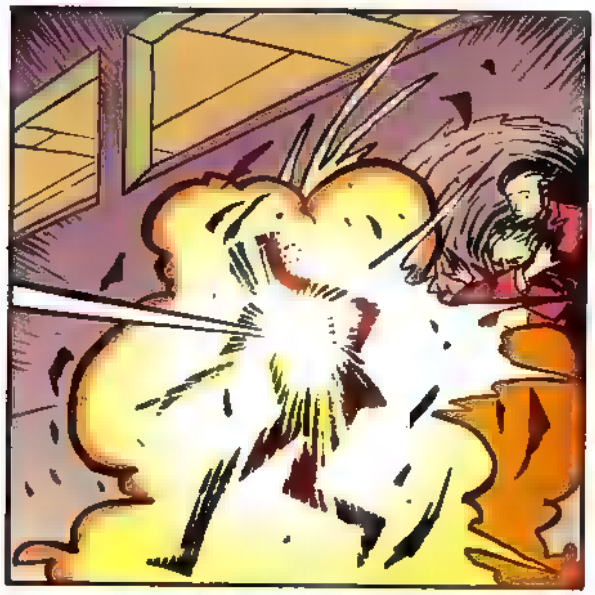

IN METALSCREAM'S HOUSE IS A GALLERY THAT CHANGES, DEPICTING OCCULT EVENTS THE WORLD OVER.
A PICTUREFRAME SHIMMERS, ITS ALIEN CANVAS SHOWING A CHURCH...
"THE RED HERMITAGE STANDS PRESENT, GRANDLORD, SAVE FOR OUR CLERIC DARKCORE."

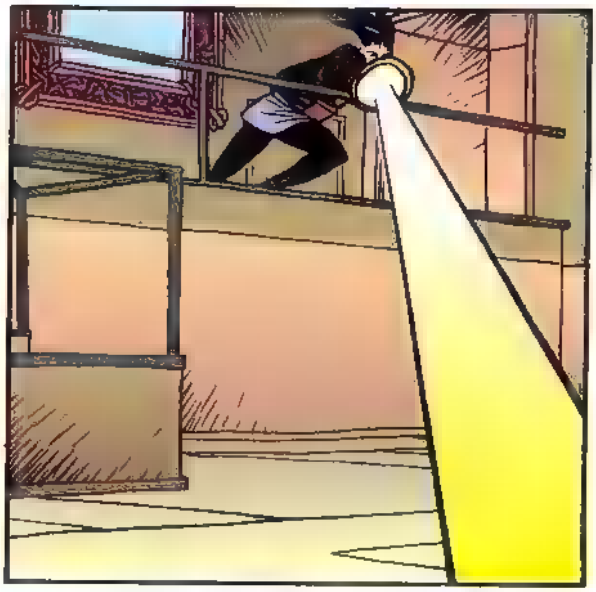
HE WAS [redacted] BY THE ROGUE OCCULTIST NAMING HIMSELF METALSCREAM.
DARKCORE WAS REWIRING THE CHURCH AT CHAFFORD CITY AT THE TIME. WE DO NOT CONSIDER THIS UNRELATED.

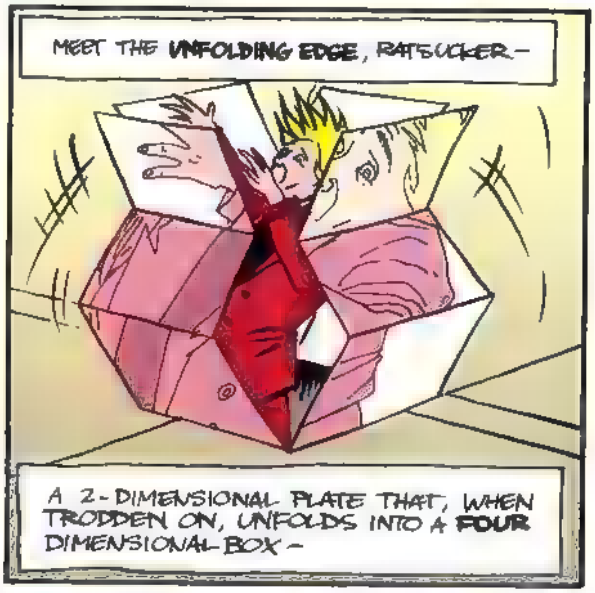
WE MUST ASSUME METALSCREAM KNOWS OUR GOAL. WE CANNOT COMPLETE THE CIRCLE, NOW THAT THE CHAFFORD CHURCH IS NO MORE.
WITHOUT A CIRCLE OF RECEIVERS, WE WILL NOT SIPHON ENOUGH POWER TO EFFECT THE REMAKING.
I AWAIT YOUR COMMAND, GRANDLORD.


THE GRANDLORD'S FAITH SPEAKS IN WHISPERS, AND ONLY TO ME.
THE GENERAL SYNOD SHALL REBUILD THE CHAFFORD CHURCH.
THE ELITE SYNOD SHALL ACCOMPANY ME —TO ARIZONA.
I WATCH THE GENERAL SYNOD – THE RANK AND FILE OF THE HERMITAGE 'PORT TO THE DEAD TOWN.
THROUGH THE MANTIC PICTUREFRAME, I SEE THEM RECONSTRUCT THE CHURCH. IT DOESN'T TAKE LONG.
AND I WAIT FOR THE ELITE SYNOD – WHO ARE LIKE THE NAVY SEALS IN DOGCOLLARS.


I AM PIGSICK OF WAITING.
THEY FIND THE HOUSE BY LOOKING FOR WHAT ISN'T THERE - LOGICAL, REALLY.
THEY PICK THROUGH THE HOUSE'S DEFENSES AND BURN A WAY IN.
IT'S JUST ME, THE BAD DISCIPLE, BETWEEN THEM AND THE BOSS.
LET'S SHOW 'EM ALL WHAT A GOOD GIRL I CAN BE.

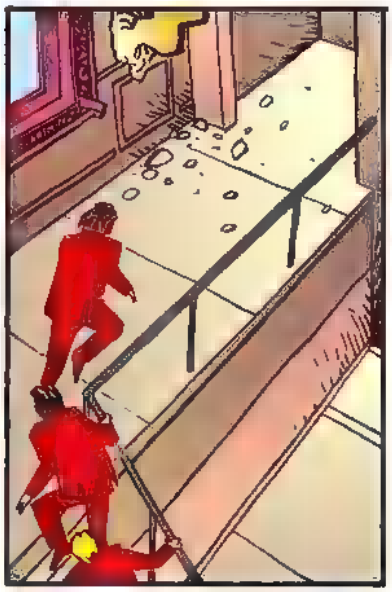




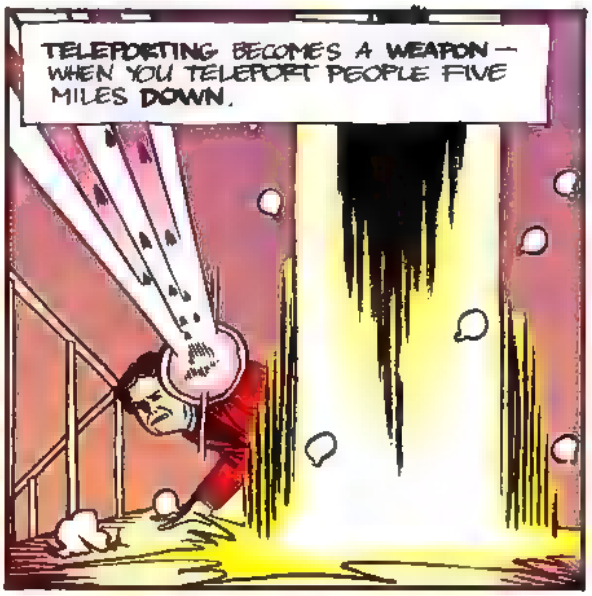

MEET THE UNFOLDING EDGE, RATSUCKER-
A 2-DIMENSIONAL PLATE THAT, WHEN TRODDEN ON, UNFOLDS INTO A FOUR DIMENSIONAL BOX-

-AND REFOLDS DOWN AGAIN, TAKING THE CLUMSY BIGFOOT RATSUCKER WITH IT INTO SUBSPACE.
TWO DOWN.

HERETICAL VERMIN-

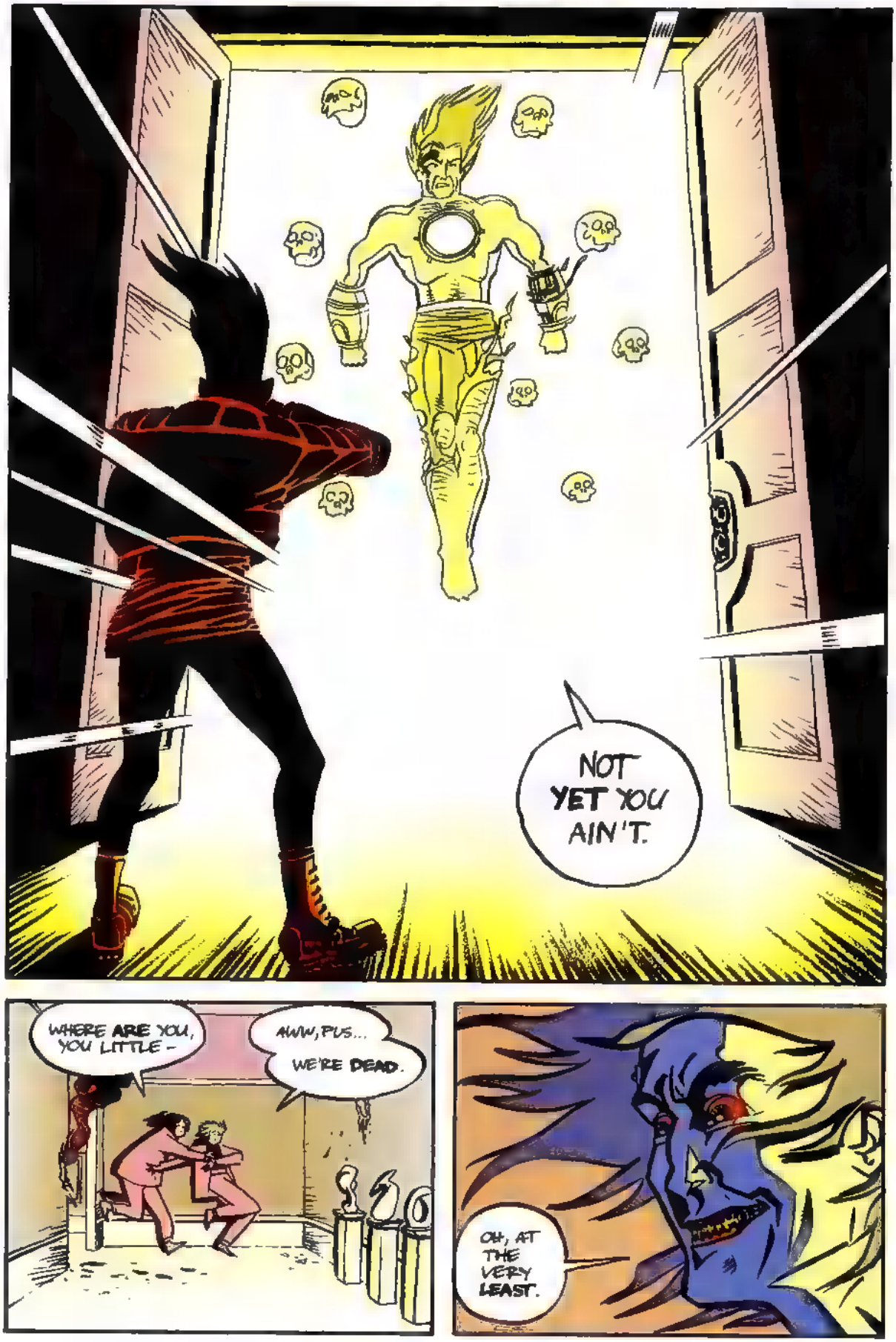


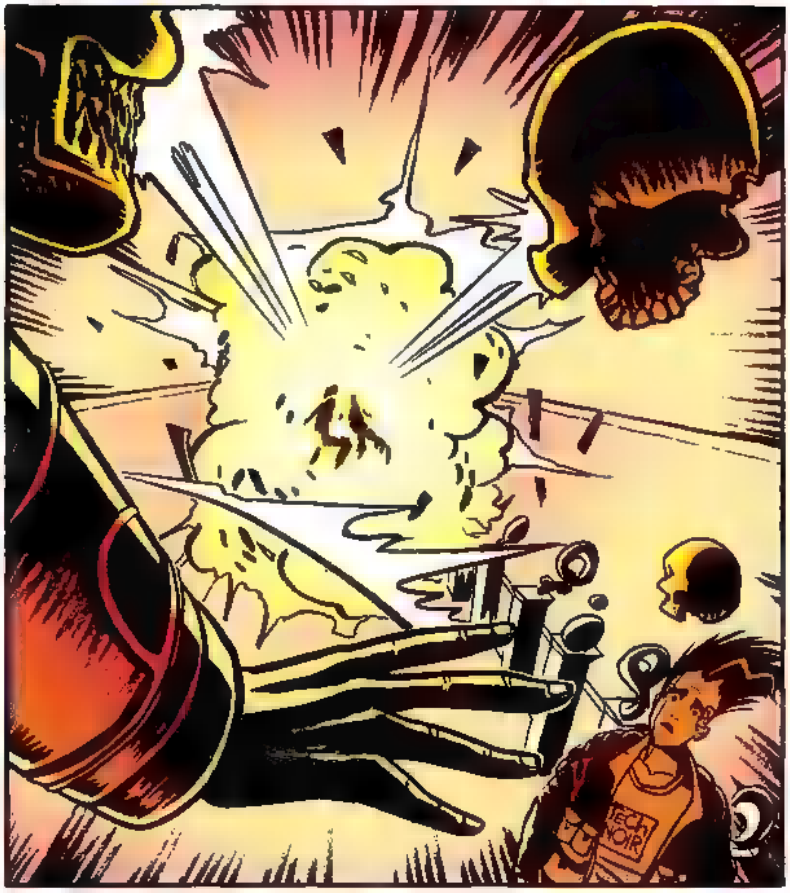
THERE'S MORE THAN ONE USE FOR ONE SPELL.
I'M BA-AACK...

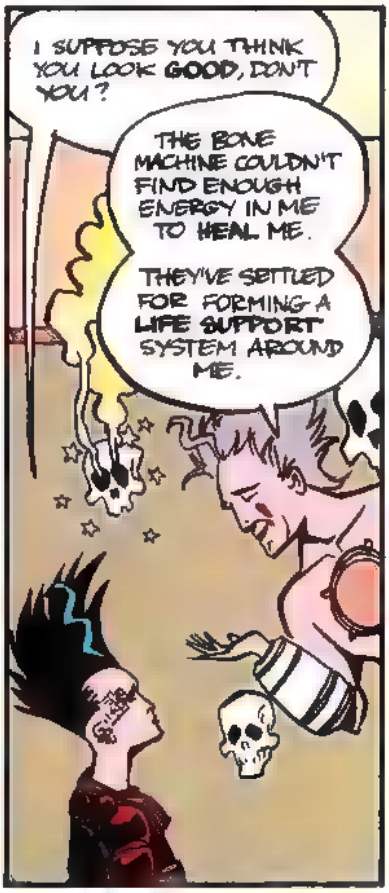

TELEPORTING BECOMES A WEAPON — WHEN YOU TELEPORT PEOPLE FIVE MILES DOWN.

BOOOW!

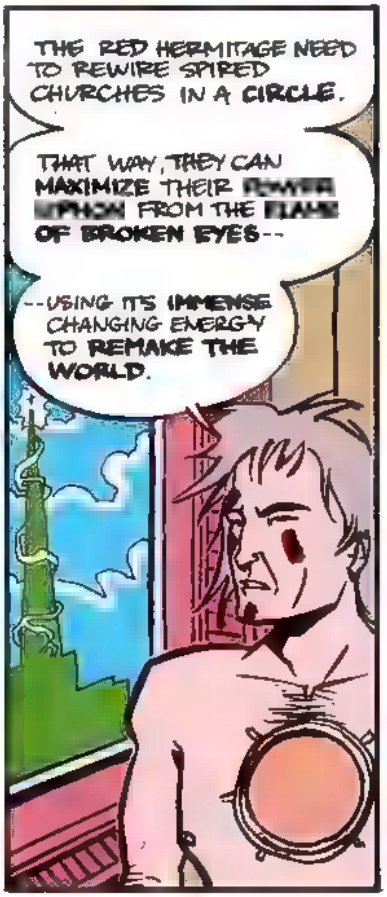
AWW, PUS...
I'M DEAD.

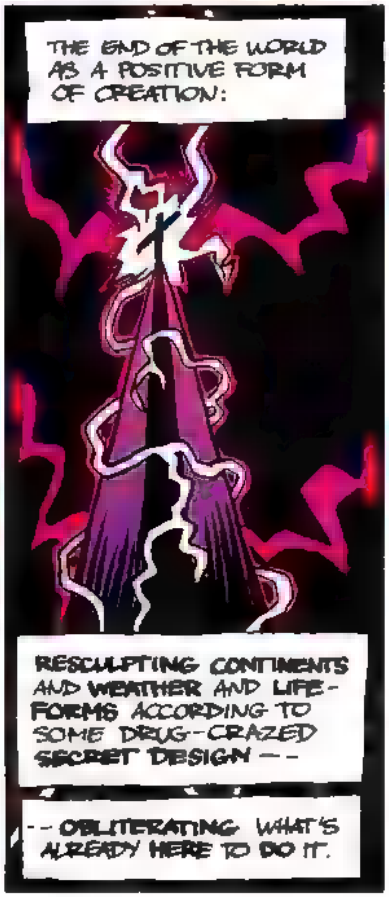

NOT YET YOU AIN'T.
WHERE ARE YOU, YOU LITTLE –
AWW, PUS... WE'RE DEAD.
OH, AT THE VERY LEAST.

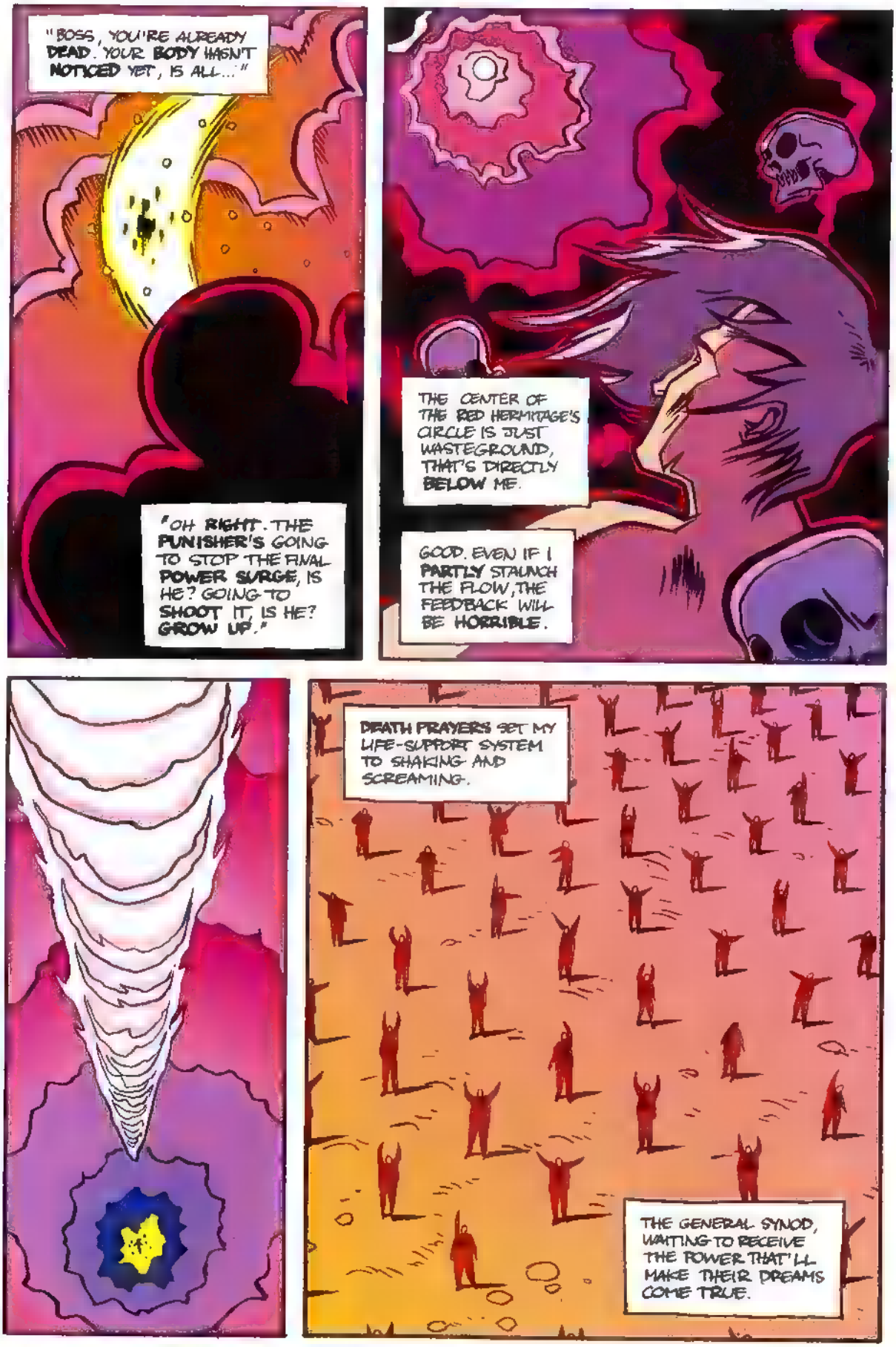



I SUPPOSE YOU THINK YOU LOOK GOOD, DON'T YOU?
THE BONE MACHINE COULDN'T FIND ENOUGH ENERGY IN ME TO HEAL ME.
THEY'VE SETTLED FOR FORMING A LIFE SUPPORT SYSTEM AROUND ME.

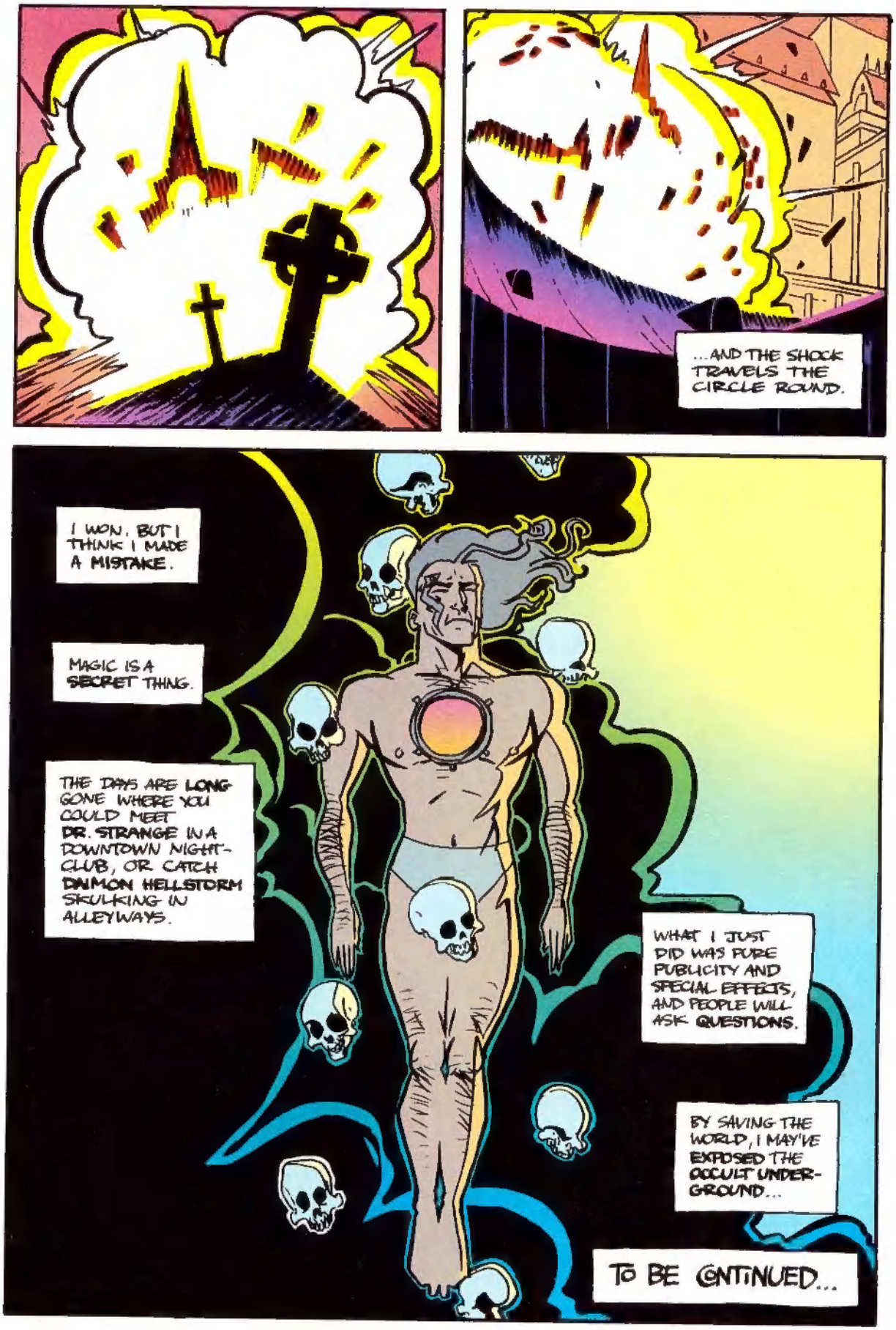
WHICH IS A BIT ANNOYING, AS THIS JOB ISN'T FINISHED YET.
THEY KILLED MY GUN, Y'KNOW.
AND THEY REBUILT THAT CHURCH YOU TRASHED. I HAVE THE FEELING THAT'S A BAD THING.


THE RED HERMITAGE NEED TO REWIRE SPIRED CHURCHES IN A CIRCLE.
THAT WAY, THEY CAN MAXIMIZE THEIR POWER [illegible]PHON FROM THE FLAME OF BROKEN EYES--
--USING IT'S IMMENSE CHANGING ENERGY TO REMAKE THE WORLD.


THE END OF THE WORLD AS A POSITIVE FORM OF CREATION:
RESCULPTING CONTINENTS AND WEATHER AND LIFE-FORMS ACCORDING TO SOME DRUG-CRAZED SECRET DESIGN--
--OBLITERATING WHAT'S ALREADY HERE TO DO IT.


"BOSS, YOU'RE ALREADY DEAD. YOUR BODY HASN'T NOTICED YET, IS ALL..."
"OH RIGHT. THE PUNISHER'S GOING TO STOP THE FINAL POWER SURGE, IS HE? GOING TO SHOOT IT, IS HE? GROW UP."
THE CENTER OF THE RED HERMITAGE'S CIRCLE IS JUST WASTEGROUND, THAT'S DIRECTLY BELOW ME.
GOOD. EVEN IF I PARTLY STAUNCH THE FLOW, THE FEEDBACK WILL BE HORRIBLE.
DEATH PRAYERS SET MY LIFE-SUPPORT SYSTEM TO SHAKING AND SCREAMING.
THE GENERAL SYNOD, WAITING TO RECEIVE THE POWER THAT'LL MAKE THEIR DREAMS COME TRUE.

AMAZING. AT THE END OF MY LIFE, I HAVE FINALLY THOUGHT BEFORE ACTING.
A CHANGING ENERGY, LIKE A SPELL, HAS MORE THAN ONE USE.
ONLY ONE CHANCE TO MAKE IT WORK.
GET BETWEEN THE POWER AND THE CIRCLE - AND MAKE IT DO TWO THINGS AT ONCE, THAT'S THE TRICK.
PROVIDE THE POWER FOR THE BONE MACHINE TO HEAL ME --
--AND WIPE THE RED HERMITAGE OFF THE HEEL OF THE WORLD.


...AND THE SHOCK TRAVELS THE CIRCLE ROUND.
I WON. BUT I THINK I MADE A MISTAKE.
MAGIC IS A SECRET THING.
THE DAYS ARE LONG GONE WHERE YOU COULD MEET DR. STRANGE IN A DOWNTOWN NIGHT-CLUB, OR CATCH DAIMON HELLSTORM SKULKING IN ALLEYWAYS.
WHAT I JUST DID WAS PURE PUBLICITY AND SPECIAL EFFECTS, AND PEOPLE WILL ASK QUESTIONS.
BY SAVING THE WORLD, I MAY'VE EXPOSED THE OCCULT UNDER-GROUND...
TO BE CONTINUED...

UNLIMITED

JOEY CAVALIERI — Editor LIA PELOSI — Assistant Editor

ALL LETTERS FOR PUBLICATION MUST INCLUDE YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS, ALTHOUGH WE WILL GLADLY WITHHOLD THAT INFORMATION UPON REQUEST.

Out Of My Head

This ish's line-up: Terry Kavanagh and I worked the Doom story out over dinner. Blame me for the parts you don't like, credit him for the stuff you do. Isn't Edmund Perryman great? He's working on another story for us, too. Thanks to Steve Moncuse for taking time out to ink that tale for us! Expect to see a lot of Warren Ellis in the 2099 Universe. D'Israeli is now one of my all-time top ten favorite cartoonists (my guest shot in this issue's story did not constitute a bribe). *Midsummer Knights* was Rebecca Guay's first attempt at a comic book story. It turned out so well that she showed the pages around and she's been getting monthly work ever since!

More "firsts" next ish!

Dear 2099 UNLIMITED,

I really like your comic! I bought all five: they're really cool! Hulk 2099's become my favorite character in the Marvel Universe. One problem: You shouldn't have Spider-Man 2099 in the UNLIMITED. Let Spidey stay in his own book. You'll have more room to fit new 2099 characters here. But if you must keep him in, have him fight that Chernobyl guy from the ANNUAL again. He's pretty neat. Give us 2099 UNLIMITED monthly, not quarterly. I don't like waiting three or four months for a comic I really like. Lachryma 2099 is pretty cool, too. Keep her in.

Jonathan Tuzman
250 Midland Ave.
Montclair, NJ 07042

Glad you liked SPIDER-MAN 2099 ANNUAL #1. It's still on sale in some comics shops, so you can see what the fuss was about. In fact, you should, 'cause Ian Edginton's workin' on a Chernobyl solo tale for these pages! Ian's also penning a return for Lachryma, too!

Dear 2099 Crew,

I collect 2099 UNLIMITED and all of the 2099 monthly titles. I have zillions of things I'd love to see in them. First, I want a Spidey and Vulture re-match (who doesn't?). Second, Dethstryk needs to come back in RAVAGE 2099. DOOM 2099: tell us who and where the real Doom is. Is he in the Savage Land? Is he on some island in the Pacific, or is he with Reed Richards somewhere? I know they're not dead.

PUNISHER 2099: give us a Punisher Armory. You need to find a strong, hard-to-beat villain.

The X-Men 2099 are some of the best characters I know. The stories are some of the best, too. They should always fight teams. They need more members because nobody's *together* anymore. Metalhead, Bloodhawk, Skullfire and Xi'an have been slowly going their separate ways.

I also want to see team-ups and the introduction of new characters into the 2099 Universe. 2099's Universe should be in continuity with the present Marvel Universe. Have Cable or Bishop come see the X-Men 2099 or team with Spidey 2099. Till the Punisher hangs up his guns for a water pistol, make mine Marvel.

Brian Kilpatrick
8143 Vintage Creek
Spring, TX 77379

Brian, whaddaya mean, "the real Doom"? As for Vulture— keep reading, Punisher Armory— keep writing and new X-Men— keep counting. Their numbers'll go up soon! Oh, and Dethstryk's back starting in RAVAGE #25, the Anniversary ish!

Dear Unlimited Men,

Salutations again, compadres! Kudos on issue #5 of the world's greatest comic book!

I don't like the Hulk being spotlighted in 2099 UNLIMITED every month, especially now that he has his own mag. There are many other established characters out there who deserve the spot. Let's see them.

I really like the Duke Stratosphere, Metalscream and Lachryma features. I would support one-shots containing them or even Kid Current. When you're dealing with new heroes like them, one-shots are the way to go. Throughout history they've been underused, but they're a good way to "test the waters."

On the subject of literacy, I applaud the editors and writers for showing that they are well-read, literate people. Literary references are just about dead anywhere this side of Howard Chaykin and it's good to see they still live. I'd also like to recommend Phillip Jose Farmer's Riverworld books, anything by Robert A. Heinlein and "To A God Unknown" by John Steinbeck. If you've read any of these, please contact me. Let's all become literary pen pals.

Phillip Spencer
5133 Muskrat Rd.
Weed, CA 96094

The Hulk's history, Phil. Now that he's a solo star, he's being replaced for the time being by the Public Enemy. But there are more surprises up our collective sleeve!

Dear UNLIMITED,

For the 2099 Awards:

1) Best Character— Spider-Man 2099. He's everything a hero should be.

2) Best Costume— Skullfire. Now that he's got his black and white make-up, he looks cool!

3) Best Villain— Vulture 2099. He's a cannibal! How cool can you get?

4) Best Supporting Character— Quirk. She's sexy!

5) Most Changed Character— Ravage. Do I really have to explain?

6) Best Issue— 2099 UNLIMITED #1. Great premiere of the Hulk 2099!

7) Best Story Arc— SPIDER-MAN 2099 #1-3. The best story I've ever read!

8) Best Death— Vulture 2099. Awesome death for an awesome character.

Emanuel Texeira
272 Elm St. E.
Raynham, MA 02767

We invite the rest of you readers to nominate your favorites, same as Tex.

Dear UNLIMITED,

I could start by saying the 2099 Universe is the best universe in comics today, but everyone knows that already! So without wasting anymore space, here's a list of things I'd like to see in 2099:

1) You probably don't get too many requests for this, but please consider it: Alpha Flight 2099. Maybe not their own series, but at least a run in the UNLIMITED.

2) Spider-Man vs. Bloodhawk or any of the X-Men 2099. They never met in the "Fall of the Hammer."

3) The Net Prophet in the UNLIMITED or his own series. He's a great character but give him a better name!

4) Everyone vs. the Hulk!

5) More of Tyler Stone. He's one of the best and least developed characters on 2099. I loved his reaction to Kron's death (SPIDEY 2099 #10).

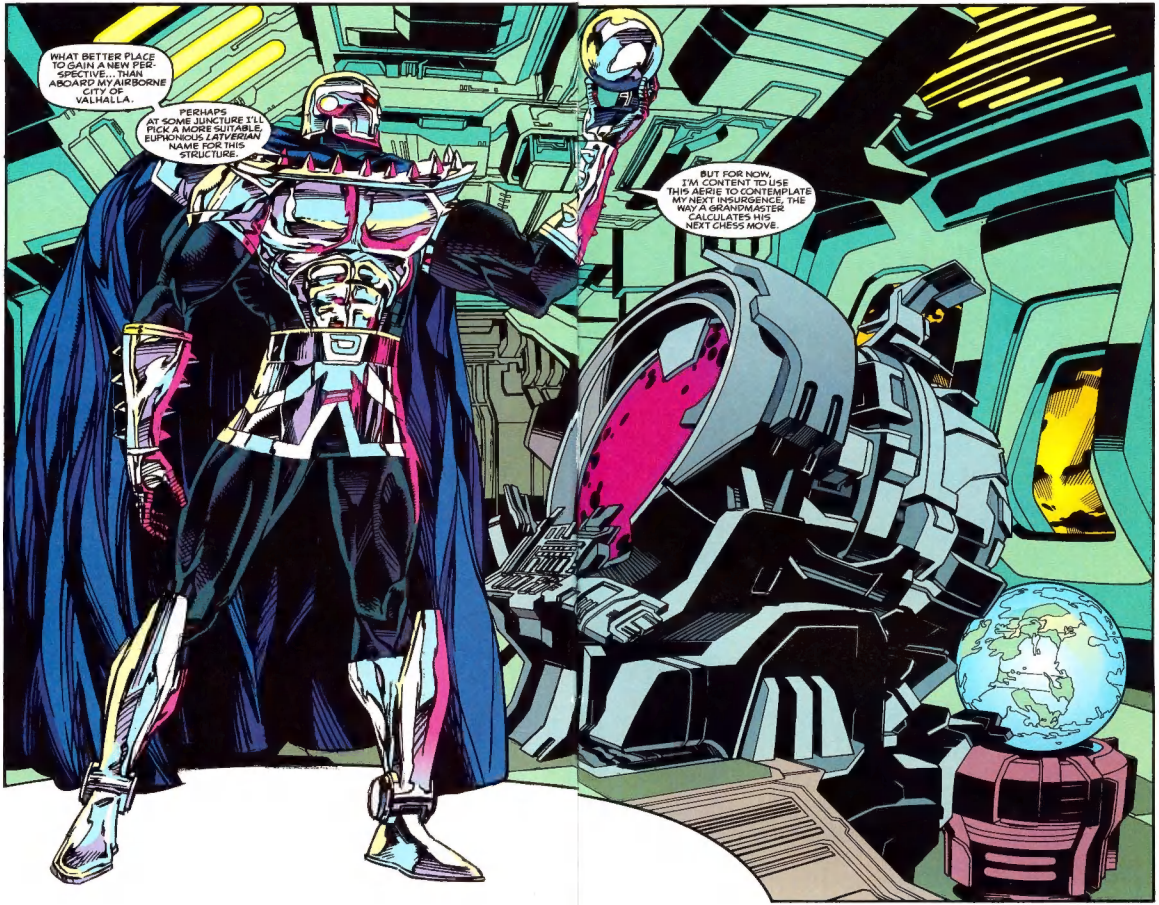
Congrats on producing the greatest universe in all of comics! 2099 rules!

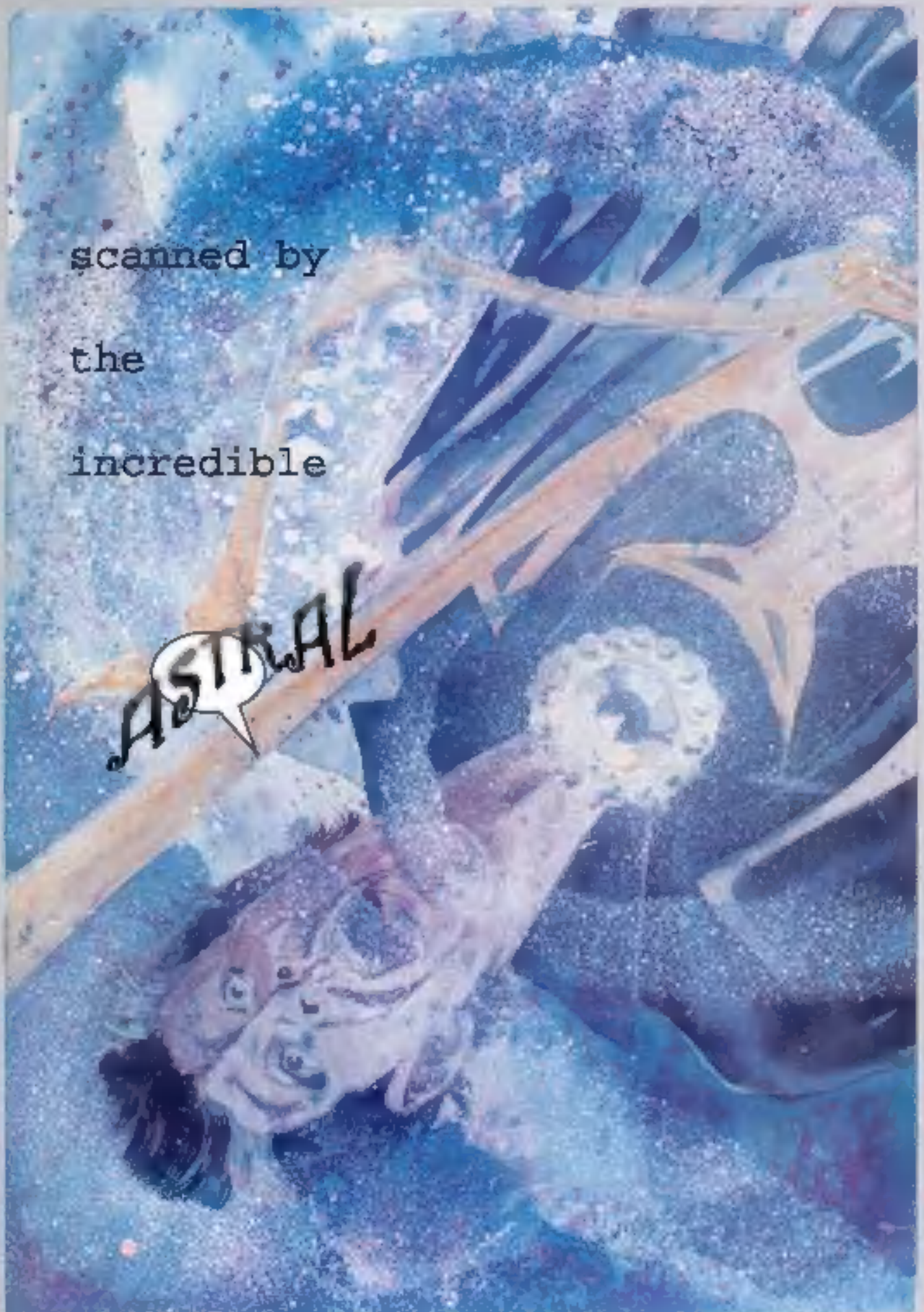
Ahsan Hague
(Address withheld by request)

The Net Prophet's in SPIDER-MAN 2099 #25! Tyler Stone's in this ish! Got any more cool ideas?

NEXT ISSUE

The Public Enemy makes his UNLIMITED debut in a story torn from today's headlines and transplanted a hundred years hence! Even if you absolutely hate armed vigilante stories of the Punisher variety, this one'll change your mind! Plus, more new guys!


WHAT BETTER PLACE TO GAIN A NEW PERSPECTIVE... THAN ABOARD MY AIRBORNE CITY OF VALHALLA.
PERHAPS AT SOME JUNCTURE I'LL PICK A MORE SUITABLE, EUPHONIOUS LATVERIAN NAME FOR THIS STRUCTURE.
BUT FOR NOW, I'M CONTENT TO USE THIS AERIE TO CONTEMPLATE MY NEXT INSURGENCE, THE WAY A GRANDMASTER CALCULATES HIS NEXT CHESS MOVE.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